BAHADUR SHAH
The Last Mogul Emperor of India

S. M. Burke
&
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SANG-E-MEEL PUBLICATIONS
25 - Shahrah-e-Pakistan (Lower Mall), Lahore

1995

Published by :

NIAZ AHMAD

Sang-e-Meel Publications

Lahore

Printed at :

N.O Printers

Lahore

Rs. 250.00

ISBN - 969 - 35 - 0626 - X

PREFACE

At the time of the Great Rebellion of 1857, Bahadur Shah was in his dotage. His much publicised ineffective role in that cataclysm, has obscured the many attractive sides of his character.

Those who met him personally before the Rebellion, have all spoken highly of his courteous disposition, blameless conduct and cultural inclination.

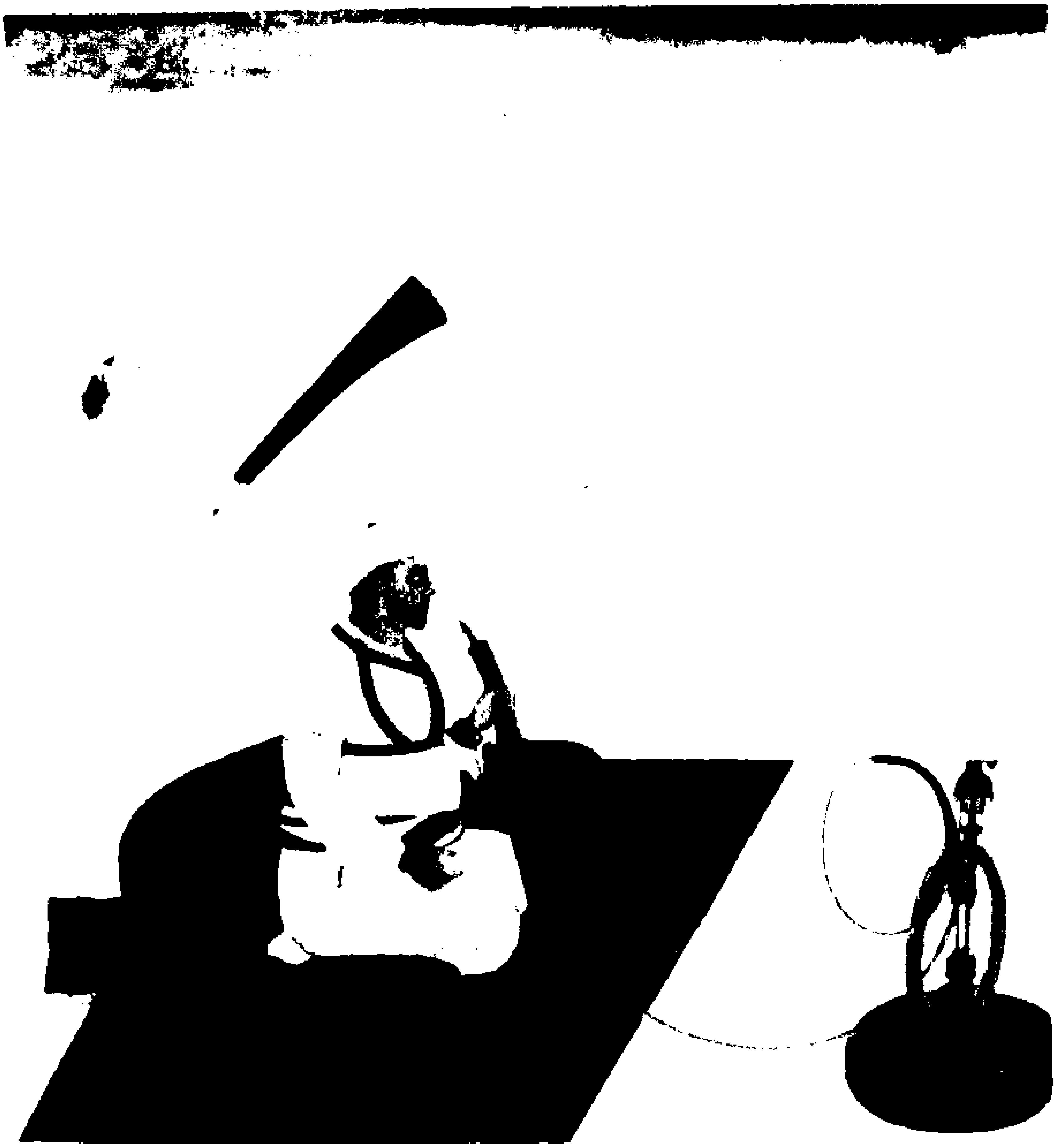
He began to compose verses as a young man and is today remembered principally as a poet. But he was also an accomplished calligrapher, a patron of painters, and fond of gardens. He was of sufic persuasion and was much loved by the people of India for his piety, exemplary manners and gentleness. His restricted circumstances did not permit him to emulate the Great Mughal in the larger fields of architecture, administration and warfare but within the limits fate had permitted him, he certainly was a true Mughal. He can scarcely be blamed for the fall of the Mughal empire. The Mughal emperors had virtually become the pensioners of the British authorities since the time of his grandfather Shah Alam. The failure of the Great Rebellion provided the British with the excuse to administer the constitutional *coup de grace to* the last

figurehead of the line.

We hope this biography of the last Mughal emperor will help toward a better appreciation of this noble, if not heroic, figure.

The division of labour between the two authors has been that Burke has done most of the writing and Quraishi most of the research.

S.M.Burke
Salim al-Din Quraishi



Bahadur Shah as Heir Apparent

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to tender the greatest amount of their gratitude to Professor Burke's daughter, Mrs. Pamela Pauline Cass, who has worked on the preparation of this book as hard as they have themselves. She has not only patiently typed the maunscript but has taken an interest in the subject-matter as well and made innumerable valuable suggestions.

They also feel indebted to Mr. R.H. Belcher C.M.G., to Professor Burke's daughter Robin and to her husband Professor G.H. Hallsmith for reading the manuscript and making corrections and improvements to the text.

ILLUSTRATIONS

1

The Erosion of Moghul Sovereignty:
Shah Alam and Akbar Shah

The manner in which the Moghul dynasty was replaced by British imperialism in India was a unique historical phenomenon in the long history of the subcontinent. Previously the pattern and uniformly been that a foreign military adventurer would swoop down from the North-Western mountain passes upon the fertile plains below, overcome the local resistance, proclaim himself king, and found a dynasty; he and his followers, would then merge into India's existing vast population.

But the seafaring British arrived in southern parts of India in the early part of the seventeenth century as mere traders at the mercy of the Moghul emperor and other princes. They were servants of the London East India Company which had been given a charter on the last day of 1600 A.D. by Elizabeth I granting it a monopoly of trade with the East. They lived by themselves in factories (trading posts) and made no secret of the fact that India was not to be their permanent abode but a place to which they had journeyed to work for profit and from where they would eventually return to the little island from which they

had originated. Their small number and refusal to become Indians made it impossible for them to form a sizeable citizen ruling class after the fashion of their Muslim predecessors. Throughout their stay in India they remained a tiny minority of strangers. The shallowness of their roots was vividly demonstrated by the ease with which they ultimately detached themselves in August 1947 from the land they had dominated for nearly centuries.

While the centre at Delhi under the Moghul emperor remained strong the British never dreamed that they would ever rule over an empire larger even than that of the Great Moghuls. It was when the Moghul centre began to decay and a general free for-all developed in the country that the British joined the fray; to stand still would have invited destruction either by a rival European power or by an ambitious Indian prince. Once the British effort had begun, the continuing need for self-preservation and natural ambition fed by recurring successes combined to ensure that there was no pause till the geographical limits of the South Asian subcontinent had been reached. As mere traders without a king to place on the throne and without the numerical strength to overcome the odds against them, the only option open to them was to adopt the well-tried strategy of divide and rule and proceed deliberately. Clive laid the foundation of British political power by winning the battle of Plassey in 1757 but it was not till 1849 that the conquest of India was completed by the East India Company by taking the Punjab from the Sikhs.

Luckily for them the anarchic conditions then prevailing in India were favourable to their purpose. They had no difficulty in recruiting Indian sepoys to fight other Indians or in enlisting the support of some Indian princes in their fight against other Indian princes. The biggest effort made by Indians to expel the British from their homeland was the Great Rebellion of

1857. Though there were more than seven sepoys to every British soldier, the insurrection was suppressed because most of the people and princes did not side with the rebels[1]. It was only when the rise of nationalism turned the balance of public opinion against them that the British were compelled to hand over India to its rightful owners.

Shah Alam (1759-1806)

Though the first Moghul emperor to fall under the control of the British was Shah Alam, the decline of the House of Timur[2] had been perceptible for some time past. After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, the dissident martial elements such as the Marathas, the Sikhs and the Jats became more active and the *subedars* (viceroys of provinces) began to have visions of independence.

In 1724, Nizam-ul-Mulk resigned the office of *Wazir* (prime minister) and took up the viceroyalty of the southern provinces and became virtually independent. His descendants continued to rule from Hyderabad till 1747. Alivardi Khan made himself viceroy of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa by force of arms. He too became independent in all but name and considered his position hereditary. Not having any nearer relatives, he nominated his great-nephew Siraj-ud-daula as his successor. Upon Alivardi's demise in 1756, Siraj became viceroy.

Before his death Alivardi had ordered the British and the French to desist from strengthening the fortifications of their respective settlements in preparation for the impending war between their two countries. The French had obeyed but the British had not. To chastise the recalcitrant traders, the newly installed viceroy attacked Calcutta. He was defeated by Clive at Plassey, on 23 June 1757. As Mir Jaffar, Siraj's chief army commander, had intrigued with the British against his master, the victors rewarded him by

proclaiming him viceroy. Mir Jafar proitiated Clive and his colleagues with princely gifts. Clive's share was £234,000 down plus a land grant producing about £30,000 a year. By virtue of their military supremacy, the British henceforth became the real ruling power in Bengal which, at that time, was India's richest province because of its fertility and mercantile pre-eminance.

The heart of Mogul empire also suffered direct blows from elsewhere. In 1738 those 'land pirates', the Marathas, made plundering raids right up to Delhi and compelled the emperor, Muhammad Shah (1719-48), to cede Malwa to them, creating a barrier between the Deccan and the north. And in the following year Nadir Shah of Iran sacked Delhi, massarced some 30,000 persons, and carried away the Peacock Throne and enough booty to remit taxes in his own kingdom for three years. Muhammad Shah's coffers were empty and Mogul power never quite recovered from the onslaught.

Delhi now became a hotbed of intrigue and confusion. the emperor Alamgir II (1754-59) was completely dominated by his ambitious minister, Ghazi-ud-din, who held the heir apparent, prince Ali Gauhar, also under strict surveillance. One day in 1758, Ali Gauhar picked up his sowrd and valiantly cut his way through the ranks of besiegers with the help of a few chosen followers. His father had invested him with the viceroyalty of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and he made his way to those areas. It was his intention to regain control of the eastern parts of the empire and make them the spring-board for retrieving the fortunes of his family.

Alamgir II was assassinated at Delhi in November of the following year. Upon the receipt of the news of the tragedy, the prince proclaimed himself emperor and assumed the title of Shah Alam (25 December 1759). He enlisted the help of Shuja-ud-daula,

Nawab of Oudh, on whom he conferred the office of *wazir*[3] of the empire. But his compaigns failed, partly because the Nawab proved to be an incompetent and unreliable ally but chiefly because the British, who were the strongest party in the power struggle, spurned his overtures and instead backed up their own puppet, Mir Jafar. One of Shah Alam's more serious setbacks occurred in February 1760 when he was defeated by the combined forces of the British and Mir Jafar's son Miran, near Patna. In October of the same year, the British dismissed Mir Jafar and installed his son-in-law, Mir Kasim, as viceroy.

With Delhi still unsettled, the Mahrattas began to dream of dominating the empire from the centre. They were, however, decisively defeated at Panipat on 17 January 1761 by Ahmad Shah Abdali of Afghanistan who proclaimed Shah Alam emperor and invited him to rule from Delhi, his rightful capital, Shah Alam offered the *diwani* (right to collect revenue) of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to the British and started towards Delhi. However, he could proceed no further than Allahabad where he took shelter with Nawab Shuja-ud-daula, who treated the fallen monarch more as a prisoner than an honoured guest.

In the meantime Mir Kasim in Bengal had proved to self-willed a viceroy to suit the greedy officials of the East India Company. They hounded him out of office in 1763 and promptly brought back the more pliable Mir Jafar. Mir Kasim fled to Oudh and was promised help against the British by the Nawab. But a joint venture by Shuja, Kasim and Shah Alam to take Bengal ended disastrously at Buxar in Bihar on 22 October 1764 when they were defeated by a British force under Major Hector Munro. The Nawab and Mir Kasim fled the field but the emperor evidently had enough of his uneasy alliance with the Nawab. He pitched his camp next to

that of the British and asked for their protection. From this point dependence on others became a permanent feature of the status of the Moghul kings.

The East India Company, hitherto, had no recognized administrative status. It was just a trading organization with a private army which was strong enough to make and unmake viceroys in Bengal. Clive had left India for England in February 1760 and returned to Calcutta in May 1765. He was faced with the task of stabilising affairs following the defeat of the emperor and the Nawab of Oudh at Buxar.

During Clive's absence from the scene, the emperor had been promised Oudh but Clive reneged on this because it seemed to him 'a foolish step'. The Nawab was deemed 'a better protection against Maharatta and Afghan invasion... The Emperor was given to understand that since it was inconvenient to put him in possession of the usurped dominions of Shuja Dawla...the districts of Coorah and Allahabad (jointing yielding a revenue of twenty-eight lacs) must suffice for a royal demesne...Shah Alam remonstrated warmly but to no purpose; he was compelled to cancel all past agreements and bestow on the Company complete possession of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa under the name of the "perpetual Dewannee" clogged only by a yearly tribute of twenty-six lacs of rupees'[4]. The Nawab was given back his viceroyalty minus the districts of Allahabad and Kora. Since there was no love lost between them, the rehabilitation of the Nawab was a slap in the face of the emperor.[5] Some years later during the Governor-Generalship of Hastings the then Nawab of Oudh, with British encouragement, assumed the title of King, thereby totally repudiating the authority of the Moghul emperor.

The *firman* of Shah Alam dated 12 August 1765 not only granted the *diwani* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa

to the East India Company 'from generation to generation, for ever and ever' but it also legalised the status of their army which had made them the unauthorized masters of Bengal since Plassey; it even permitted them to finance that army directly from the proceeds of the *diwani*: '...as the said Company are obliged to keep up a large army for the protection of the Province of Bengal, etc., we have granted to them whatsoever may remain and of the revenues of the said provinces, after remitting the sum of twenty-six lakhs of rupees to the royal Circar'.[6] Legally the emperor remained the Company's master but in effect he became their pensioner and they could rule Bengal with his sanction.

Shah Alam had taken up residence at Allahabad and no doubt could have passed his days peacefully there. But he longed to get back to Delhi to capture bygone glory. 'This natural desire had been recognized by the English who had promised as early as May 1761 to escort him to Delhi with their forces. This promise had been repeated year after year, and even by Lord Clive in 1765; it still stood at the end of 1767; but it was never fulfilled'[7]. Shah Alam's opportunity to realize his dream came when the Mahrattas having occupied Delhi, invited him to come there and ascend the throne of his forefathers. As a part of the deal he ceded the districts of Allahabad and Kora to the Mahrattas. He left Allahabad in May 1771 and on 25 December 'made his entry into the capital with much pomp and splendour, and amidst the acclamations of all ranks of people'.[8]

The Emperor had consulted the British who had advised him not to trust the Mahrattas and in the event he was poorly treated by the Mahrattas and suffered shameful degradation and torture at the hands of the Rohillas. British historians have on that account criticised the ill-fated monarch for his decision to leave British protection.[9] But it is always easy to be wise after

the event. The British had been unwilling to escort him to Delhi themselves to assert his imperial rights. The promises held out by the Mahrattas seemed to be his only chance. It was a gamble but the prize was alluring enough to merit a throw of the dice. Things did not turn out to be as he had hoped but he and his successors did attain the satisfaction of sitting on their ancestral throne and exercising sovereignty within the precincts of their family palace-fortress. This was at least preferable to stagnating indefinitely in the provincial town of Allahabad as pensioners without any royal trappings.

The British had no desire themselves to help Shah Alam take Delhi and relished even less the fact that their rivals for the control of India, the Mahrattas, had done so. They retaliated by discontinuing the annual payment of twenty-six lakhs of rupees due to Shah Alam for having granted the *diwani* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to them and made over the districts of Allahabad and Kora to their own protege, the Nawab of Oudh. These measures are understandable in terms of real politic but are indefensible morally and legally. By discontinuing the tribute the Company in effect repudiated Shah Alam's sovereignty over them and annexed Bengal and by making over Allahabad and Kora to the Nawab they threw another bone of contention between him and his rivals for power, the Mahrattas, who claimed these districts as grantees from the emperor.

Shah Alam's first decade at Delhi was promising. The Mahrattas made over control of Delhi to him and he was assisted by a capable and loyal minister in the person of Najaf Khan. But chaos returned after the death of Najaf Khan in April 1782. Shah Alam was no longer in the prime of life[10] and the strain of having struggled against heavy odds for so long had also taken its toll. He found it increasingly difficult to assert

himself. The Mahratta chief Madho Rao Sindhia and the British were both approached for assistance[11] but while negotiations with the former remained inconclusive, Sindhia in October 1784 assumed control of Shah Alam's kingdom.

The emperor appointed Sindhia's nominal superior, the infant Peshwa, as *Vakil-i-mutlaq* (Sole Regent of the Empire) in *absentia* but the working minister was Sindhia with the rank of deputy regent. Sindhia was given command of the Moghul army and administrative control of the provinces of Delhi and Agra. He allotted rupees 65,000 per month for the expenses of the royal establishment and promised increases if the revenues of the two provinces justified the same.

Sindhia's rout at the hands of the Rajputs and his consequent retreat to Gwalior in the summer of 1788, enabled the Rohilla chief Ghulam Qadir to take Delhi and with it the custody of the king and his household. Ghulam Qadir's treatment of the royal family was described by Jonathan Scott in a letter to Warren Hastings:

> I have a dreadful account of the unfortunate fate of Shah Aulum and his family. The poor old king had his eyes put out, wanted common necessaries and was often beaten by the abominable Golaum Khadir who made the young princes sing for his amusement, calling them ATOMNY BATCHES [sic] and other vile names. The women of the Harem were stripped, beaten and numbers died from hunger. Several threw themselves over the Ramparts of the Palace and were drowned in the Jumna. The floors of every apartment in the Citadel were dug up, every article seized, even to the Pots of the Kitchens...Shah Aulum was seven days without any food but coarse bread and water.[12]

And a contemporary writer recorded the gruesome details of Shah Alam's blinding :

> The Rohilla, with characteristic inhumanity, commanded his attendants to seize the king. Having thrown him on the floor, the ferocious ruffian implanting himself on his bossom, transfixed with a poignard the eyes of his venerable sovereign! On the completion of this horrid deed, Gholaum Caudir ordered the king to be removed to a distant apartment. The miserable Shah Aulum, pale and bleeding, was conducted to his retreat; there, in all bitterness of anguish, to contemplate on his now ruined fortune... Shah Aulum surviving the loss of his sight during his confinement, solaced himself in contemplative reveries, and in composing elegiac verses, descriptive of his deplorable fate.[13]

Meanwhile Sindhia had not been sitting idle. He rallied his own troops and having reinforced them with contingents from fellow Maratha leaders, marched northwards. He overcame Ghulam Qadir near Meerut, took him prisoner, re-occupied Delhi in 1789 and re-seated Shah Alam on the throne. It was now Ghulam Qadir's turn to suffer blood-curdling torture for his diabolical deeds:

> He was first placed in an iron cage, constructed for the occasion, and in this situation was suspended in front of the army. After sustaining the insults and indignities of the soldiers, his nose, ears, hands and feet were cut off, and in this mutilated and miserable condition he was...sent off to Delhi; but, on the journey, death relieved the miserable wretch from his sufferings: thus dreadfully atoning for the crimes of his savage and abandoned life.[14]

The British had remained indifferent to Shah Alam's plight till their own interests were affected.

When the emperor was tortured by the heartless Rohilla Ghulam Qadir, Governor-General Cornwallis shrugged off the matter with the observation that 'If we should now free him, unless we could give him an army or a permanent fund for the payment of it, he would immediately again become the slave and perhaps the prisoner of some other tyrant'.[15] He wrote to Shore, 'I have received several melancholy [letters] from the King calling on me in the most pressing terms for assistance and support. This morning I wrote to him a letter, perfectly civil and respectful, but without all that jargon of allegiance and obedience, in which I stated most explicitly the impossibility of our interference.[16]

It was the French threat in Europe with its possible repercussions in India that caused the British to strive to regain the custody of Shah Alam by adopting a 'forward' policy. Napoleon Bonaparte the 'son' of the French Revolution and a military genius of the highest order, conquered Egypt in 1789 and made no secret of his fascination for the east and his ambition to march to India. In India several French adventurers had been employed by the native rulers to improve the efficiency of their armies. A French General named Perron had obtained from Sindhia the position of commandant of the fortress of Delhi and had thus secured the possession of the person of Shah Alam. the redoubtable and ambitious Tipu, Sultan of Mysore, had actually been negotiating for French help against the British. To frustrate the French designs in India, the London authorities in 1789 appointed the born imperialist Wellesley as Governor-General. He attended to Tipu first. The Sultan was killed in May 1799 fighting bravely in defence of his capital.

The importance which the French attached to holding Shah Alam was brought home to Wellesley by a document obtained at Pondicherry from a French officer named Le Febre. It was a Memorial on the most

'efficacious means of re-establishing the French nation on its ancient splendour' in India:

> It is evident that Shah Aulum ought to be the undisputed sovereign of the Moghul Empire... it remains to consider whether it is not possible that the branches of this unfortunate family may find at some time protectors, who shall asset their sacred rights and break their ignominious chains...The English Company, by its ignominious treatment of the great Moghul, has forfeited its rights as *dewan* and treasurer of the Empire; the Nabobs of Oudh and of Bengal are equally criminal, because they have acted as traitors towards their lawful sovereign; thus the Emperor of Delhi has a real and indisputable right to transmit to whomsoever he may please to select the sovereignty of his 'dominions', as well as the arrears due to him from the English.[17]

Wellesley was fully aware that:

> Notwithstanding His Majesty's total deprivation of real power, dominion, and authority, almost every state and every class of people in India continue to acknowledge his nominal sovereignty. The current coin of every established power is struck in the name of Shah Aulum. Princes and persons of the highest rank and family still bear the titles, and display the *insignia* of rank which they or their ancestors derived from the throne of Delhi, under the acknowledged authority of Shah Aulum, and His Majesty is still considered to be the only legitimate fountain of similar honours
>
> [and that]
>
> ...the French would manifestly have derived essential aid from the possession of the person and family of the Emperor Shah Aulum... The Emperor might have been compelled to constitute the territorial

possessions of France in India an independent sovereignty, and under the plea of possessing sovereign authority, the proceedings of the Government of France in India might have proved in the highest degree injurious to the interests and security of the British Empire in this quarter of the globe.[18]

The immediate contest for the possession of the person of Shah Alam, however, was not between the French Government and the British but between the British and the Marathas under whose authority French officers commanded the fortress of Delhi where the royal family resided. 'To assume; as British contemporaries did, that Shah Alam was praying for deliverance and the sound of British guns, is to look at the situation through British instead of through Moghul eyes'.[19]

Of the two rivals, the British in recent years had done more substantial damage to Shah Alam's status. In the long term, too, it would seem that there was more chance for the Moghul king to throw off the Maratha yoke. The Maratha chieftains were far from being a united fraternity and in the continuing kaleidoscopic power struggle in the country a Muslim champion could have emerged at any time to liberate the much venerated House of Timur. The British, on the other hand, were a stable power. They could lose any number of battles without losing the war. Their government and basic resources were in a distant land across the sea out of the reach of any Indian antagonist. And their power in India was growing stronger day by day.

Shah Alam had to tread warily. He could afford to offend neither his actual captors nor his prospective custodians. The British made use of Syed Raza Khan, the agent of the resident with Sindhia at Delhi, as their secret messenger. On 27 July 1803, Wellesley wrote to

the emperor that if he accepted the British offer of asylum:

> ...every demonstration of respect and every degree of attention which can contribute to the ease and comfort of your Majesty and the Royal family, will be manifested on the part of the British Government, and that adequate provision will be made for the support of your Majesty and your family and household.[20]

In his reply of 29 August, Shah Alam expressed his anxious wish to avail himself of the protection of the British Government.[21]

On the first of September Raza Khan forwarded to the British a letter under the seal of the King declaring that he had entrusted the management of all his affairs to Sindhia and to Perron as the Deputy of Sindhia and that he would take the field against the British in person. Raza Khan also informed the British that the letter in question had actually been dictated by the French officers at Delhi.[22]

The issue was clinched on 11 September 1803 by the decisive victory scored near Delhi by the Commander-in-Chief Lord Lake against a Maratha force commanded by Perron's deputy Bourguin.[23] Bourquin and five other French officers were taken prisoner. Shah Alam thus fell into British hands once more, but the formalities and the legality of the relationship between the two parties remained vague enough till the Great Rebellion of 1857 for the then Moghul king Bahadur Shah and the British Government in India to harbour diametrically opposite notions of them. Bahadur Shah believed that he was still the emperor of India and the East India Company were mere traders in his country under licence from him and that they had acted seditiously in fighting against him and taking him prisoner. The victorious British on the other hand

asserted at the trial for his alleged complicity in the rebellion that he was 'a subject of the British Government in India'.

The truth of the matter was that the British attitude towards the Moghul emperor and their treatment of him gradually changed as their position in India graduated from that of traders in India to that of Rulers of India. At the time of Wellesley, the British were on the threshold of becoming the strongest power in India but they still had a long way to go. He look advantage of the mutual jealousies of the Indian rulers and enticed them into the system of subsidiary alliances: a state was guaranteed protection against external attack in return for accepting the company's troops on its soil and paying for them and also accepting a British 'resident' in the state. But it needed time for this device to prove successful. Neither Wellesley nor the British authorities in London were confident enough at this stage to take the place of the Moghul emperor.

Wellesley, 'Recoiled from the thought of its being suspected in England, that he wished to place the East India Company, substantively or vicariously, on the throne of the Moghuls. "It has never", he wrote to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors, June 2, 1805 "been in the contemplation of this Government to derive from the charge of protecting and supporting His Majesty the privilege of employing the Royal Prerogative as an instrument of establishing any control of ascendency over the States and Chieftains of India, or of asserting on the part of His Majesty any of the claims which, in his capacity of Emperor of Hindostan, His Majesty may be considered to possess upon the provinces originally composing the Moghul Empire".

He reiterated that the benefits which he expected to derive from placing the emperor and his family under British protection were no other than those already

stated in his despatch to the Secret Committee dated 13 July 1804:

> The deliverance of the Emperor Shah Alam from the control of the French power established in the Northwest quarter of Hindostan, by which the Government of France has been deprived of a powerful instrument in the eventual prosecution of its hostile designs against the British Government in India, and the British Government has obtained a favourable opportunity of conciliating the confidence and securing the applause of surrounding states by providing a safe and tranquil asylum for the declining age of that venerable and unfortunate monarch, and a suitable maintenance for his numerous and distressed family.[24]

Wellesley was recalled in 1805 because he was moving too fast for the liking of his masters at home who were in the middle of a deadly struggle with Napoleon in Europe and unable to spare any reinforcements for India.

But the forward policy was resumed after Napoleon's disastrous retreat from Moscow in 1812 and final defeat at Waterloo in 1815. Its most zealous practitioners were Governors-General Hastings (1813-23) and Dalhousie[25] (1848-56) and, true to form, it was they who delivered the most serious blows to Moghul prestige and aspirations. Russia, which had come out of the Napoleonic wars with enhanced prestige, became the new menace to British power in India. It had borders with Iran and Afghanistan and at one place came close to Kashmir. Action now shifted to the North-Western regions of the subcontinent and Middle East.

The intermediary between Shah Alam and Wellesley was General Lake, the conqueror of Delhi. On 27 July 1803, the Governor-General communicated to

Lake the 'measures to be pursued' and 'conduct to be observed' with respect to the king and his family:

> The arrangement to be finally concluded with respect to His Majesty involves a question of great political and national importance which will form the subject of future deliberation. For the present it is my intention merely to secure to His Majesty the protection of the British Government and to assign to him and his family a provision for their immediate support. The extent of that provision must be regulated by future events and circumstances... it is my anxious desire that His Majesty and the Royal Family should immediately experience the benefit of the change, by receiving from your Excellency and from all persons acting under your authority every demonstration of reverence, respect and attention and every degree of regard to the comfort and convenience of His Majesty and the Royal Family consistent with the security of their persons.

In a letter to Shah Alam on 8 August, Lake assured the emperor: 'I am cordially disposed to render your Majesty every demonstration of my loyalty and attachment and I consider it to be a distinguished honour as it is a peculiar happiness to execute your Majesty's commands'.[27] And the resident was directed by Company's Government at Calcutta to use all forms of respect 'considered to be due to the emperors of Hindustan'.[28]

Shah Alam was entitled to believe that the status quo between him and the British had been restored and that the Company had returned to its vassalage. In providing protection to their Lord, the British were merely discharging their bounden duty; it was simply what the Marathas had been doing before them. In his letter of 29 August to Wellesley, the emperor emphasized:

It becomes necessary for the General to settle the point with Governor-General that hereafter there will be no want of obedience or cause of dissatisfaction to me.[29]

Shah Alam's assertion of supremacy was not at all questioned by Wellesley in any of his letters to the emperor or by his actual treatment of him:

Even in the depths of his misery and humiliation, he was regarded by the most magnificent of English viceroys as a mighty potentate, whom it was a privilege to protect, and sacrilege to think of supplanting.[30]

The emperor may have lost the military power to enforce his will but the aura of the House of Timur still lived in the length and breadth of India:

Princes such as the Nawab of Oudh or the Nizam of Hyderabad still made haste on their accession to obtain a formal confirmation in their offices and the grant of titles; and for these they were willing to pay in hard cash. They still struck coin in the emperor's name; in his name were still read the prayers in the mosques; and the seals which they used to authenticate their public documents still declared them the humble servants of the emperor.[31]

By no stretch of the imagination can Shah Alam be considered to have became a subject of the British Government. Yet this is precisely what C.B. Saunders, Officiating Commissioner of Delhi, blatantly deposed on 12 February 1858 during Bahadur Shah's trial:

...The city and fort [of Delhi] having been evacuated by the Marathas [following General Lake's victory in 1803], the Emperor Shah Alam sent a message to General Lake, applying for the protection of the British Authorities and on the 14th September... the British troops entered Delhi: from that time Kings of

Delhi have become pensioned subjects of the British Government...[32]

Wellesley foresaw that if Shah Alam 'were left to reside in the Palace of Shah Jehan, with all the accompaniments of his former grandeur around him, in the midst of a Mahomedan population still loyal to the House of Timur - there might some day be an attempt to reconstruct the ruined monarchy in the person of one of Shah Alam's successors, which might cause us grievous annoyance'.[33]

Accordingly, he instructed Lake 'to employ every agreement' to induce the king and the heir-apparant, Akbar Shah, to move to Monghyr. But he told the Commander-in-Chief that he had no wish to compel the king and the prince to proceed to that station.[34] The proposal dropped because the king and his entire family revolted at the thought of leaving the imperial seat.

Soon after his arrival in Delhi, Lake received information that a French officer named M. Drugeon had lodged 5½ lakhs of rupees, belonging to Sindhia, with the king's treasurer, Shah Nawaz Khan. Lake assumed that 'the transfer of it to the hands of an officer of His Majesty's treasury had no other object than to deprive the British Government of the benefit of the capture' and claimed the money 'as belonging to the British power' Lake's argument that Sindhia did not wish the British to appropriate the money was true as far as it went but it was not the whole truth. Sindhia and Drugeon must have decided that it was better to let Shah Alam have the money than to let it fall into the hands of the British. There was nothing illegal or improper about this; Sindhia was Shah Alam's minister and Drugeon was Sindhia's servant. But Shah Alam was in no position to resist Lake's demand and saved face by 'bestowing', the amount as a 'donation on the British army'. Wellesley could not very well overrule the

Commander-in-Chief but he evidently saw the justice of Shah Alam's claim. He 'thought it advisable to take an early opportunity of paying an equal sum to the use of the Emperor in such a manner as should be most acceptable to His Majesty, and as should secure its due application to His Majesty's service'.[35] But the promised sum was not paid during Shah Alam's lifetime on account of financial stringency.

This game of getting the better of each other continued in the reigns of his two successors: Akbar Shah II (1806-37) and Bahadur Shah II (1837-57). It ended in 1857 when the British deposed Bahadur Shah. The British being the paymasters as well as the militarily dominant party were, on the whole, more successful. Like most political promises, Wellesley's assurance that the British would treat the Moghul emperor with greater honour and benevolence than the Marathas had done was conveniently forgotten. But the Moghul emperors put up a good resistance despite the odds against them and they never lost their personal dignity. Their chief asset was public opinion which the British could scarcely afford to ignore. Most Indian rulers acknowledged the Moghul emperor as their overlord. Had the British openly claimed sovereignty on their own account, it might very well have provided an excuse for the Indian rulers to unite against them. And among the masses the attachment to the House of Timur simply increased in proportion to their degradation at the hands of the foreigners. At Bahadur Shah's trial, the British may have claimed that he was their subject but in Indian eyes he was the rightful emperor and the British the rebellious foreigners.[36] The British succeeded, not because they were the legitimate rulers of India, but because the Indians were shamefully divided amongst themselves.

After Queen Victoria assumed the title of Empress of India, the British image in India improved

perceptibly because of the inherent respect Indians had for a crowned head and the queen's benevolent personal interest in Indian affairs[37] and her long and patient widowhood which accorded with the Indian tradition of frowning on widow re-marriage.

On 16 September 1803, Lake waited on Shah Alam at the palace in the fort. The emperor received him seated on the throne 'when presents were delivered[38] and the forms used on these occasions were observed'. Four days later Shah Alam again summoned Lake to the palace and conferred upon him the second title in the empire - the first had already been given to Sindhia. After Lake's victory over the Marathas at Laswery, Shah Alam honoured him with a *khilat* which was ceremoniously delivered by a special envoy.

The British resident also approached Shah Alam 'with kneeworship which the most supple of courtiers might have disdained to use in approaching a European sovereign'.[39]

These marks of submission no doubt gratified Shah Alam but he was far from being satisfied with the provision made for him and his family. The scale of maintenance, the gradual curtailment of the various tokens of supremacy and the question of succession became the main irritants between the last Moghuls and the British authorities.

Before a permanent arrangement could be devised, Wellesley 'had issued instructions to the Commander-in-Chief to pay into the royal treasury the sum of six lacs of rupees with a view to provide for the immediate exigencies of His Majesty's household and the Governor-General issued orders accordingly which have since been carried into execution and the money applied to His Majesty's use'.[40]

A regular scheme for the support of Shah Alam and the royal household was worked out in 1805. It was embodied in two documents: (1) 'Original Treaty with His Majesty the King of Delhi, entered into in 1805 by the Local Government of Bengal, consisting of the Marquis of Wellesley and the Members of the Supreme Council'[41], and (2) A letter dated 23 May 1805 from the Chief Secretary to the Government to the Resident at Delhi containing the Orders of the Governor-General in Council on the subject of the provision to be made for the support of His Majesty Shah Alam and of his Royal Household.[42]

The 'Original Treaty' of 1805 reads as follows:

1. All the Mehals (districts) to the west of the Jumna, situated between the West and North of Mouza Kabilpoor, shall be considered the crown lands of His Majesty.

2. The management of these Mehals (districts) shall be continued according to custom in the hands of the Resident.

3. For His Majesty's satisfaction, the Royal Mootusuddies (accountants) shall attend at the Cutchery (collector's office) to keep accounts of the receipts and disbursements, and report the same to His Majesty.

4. Two Adauluts (Courts) one for Dewanee (civil) and the other for Foujdary (criminal) business, shall be established, and all matters coming before them shall be decided according to the rules of Mahomedan law.

5. Two learned and respectable inhabitants of Delhi shall be appointed to the office of Cazee (judge) and Mooftee (lawyer) in the above courts.

6. In every criminal case where the punishment of mutilation or death may be adjudged by the

officers of the Foujdary (criminal court) the papers will be submitted by the Resident to the King for His Majesty's decision.

7. The sums specified below shall be paid monthly by the Resident from the public treasury for the expenses of His Majesty and the royal establishment, whether the whole of the amount is, or is not collected from the Khalsah (or crown) lands.

8. Should there be an increase in the collections from the above Mehals (districts), in consequence of extended cultivation and the improved condition of the Ryots (cultivators) an augmentation to that amount will take place in the King's Peshcush (tribute).

9. The Resident will present 10,000 rupees on the occasion of each of the seven festivals held annually viz., two Eids, the anniversary of the Accession, the Nou Roze (new year's day), the Holy Ramazan, the Holy, and Bussunt.

10. The Jagheers (estates) of the heir apparent and Mirzah Aizedbukhsh, situated in the Doab, shall be made over the officers of the Honourable Company.

11. The expense of the Troops, Police Corps, &c. employed in the Khalsah (or crown lands) shall be defrayed by the Honourable Company.

[Articles 2 to 6 of the treaty relate to the administrative arrangements in the city of Delhi and the assigned territory].

The sums alluded to in Article 7 of the Treaty were:

Detail of fixed Peshcush (tribute) and other allowances	Per mensem.
For His Majesty	60,000 rupees.

The Heir apparent, exclusive of the Jagheer (estate) of Kote Cassim	10,000 rupees.
Mirza Aizedbukhsh (viz. on account of Doab Jageer) 1000 Peshcush	2,000 rupees.
Princes and Princesses, each	200 rupees.
Salary of Shah Nawaz Khan	2,500 rupees.

Paragraphs 12 and 13 of the Orders of the Governor-General in Council dated 23 May 1805 were to the following effect:

12. If the produce of the Revenue of the assigned territory should hereafter admit of it, the monthly sum to be advanced to His Majesty for his private expenses may be increased to the extent of one Lack of Rupees.

13. You are likewise authorized to pay to His Majesty at the great Festivals of the Jeshun, the Eids, Nouroze, Bussunt, Hooly, and at the Ramazan the sum of ten thousand rupees according to ancient established usage.

Within the precincts of the palace-fortress of Delhi (the Red Fort) the king retained sovereign powers and the members of the Royal family, including the *salatin*[43] who lived there, enjoyed diplomatic immunity.

On 1 July 1803 the resident at Delhi reported to Governor-General Wellesley that the proposed arrangements met with Shah Alam's satisfaction except that which concerned his own stipend of rupees 60,000 per mensem. In his reply dated 29 July the Governor-General explained that the arrangements were 'of a temporary nature' and that the 'extent of the provision assigned for His Majesty's personal expenses has been regulated by the state of our resources under the immediate pressure of the exigencies of war and the

Governor-General in Council will be disposed to augment provision when these exigencies shall cease to exist'.[44]

It is clear from the above official documents that:

(a) Wellesley gave Shah Alam to understand that the arrangements for his maintenance were of a temporary nature and the amount would be increased when the 'immediate pressure of war' ceased to exit,

(b) any increases in the income derived from the assigned land would be wholly added to the emperor's allowance,

(c) the resident was authorized to increase the king's personal allowance from rupees 60,000 to 100,000 immediately without fresh orders of the Government if the revenue of the assigned territory justified it.

The trouble arose from the fact that with settled conditions and more efficient management the revenue from the assigned lands registered and unexpectedly sharp increase[45] and the British Government wriggled out of their clear undertaking to pass on all of it to Moghul emperors. Giving his decision on Articles 1 and 8 of the treaty of 1805, Governor-General Lord Amherst wrote in 1828, 'As to the requests concerning the 1st and 8th articles of the treaty, government states, "that it was the original intention of government to have assigned certain Mehals to the west of the Jumna, for the support of His Majesty and the Royal Family: but the plan was never, from unavoidable causes, carried completely into effect, and in 1809 the royal stipend was fixed at one lack per month".

Alexander Ross, agent of the Governor-General in Delhi, criticised the attitude of the British Government

in a note dated 25 February 1823[46] which he addressed to the Secretary to the Government (Persian department). Ross stated that during his posting at Delhi, Akbar Shah gave him to understand that he expected an augmentation of his stipends proportionate to increased revenue of the territory which was assigned for the support of the Royal Household in 1805. Ross did not find the time to study the question while at Delhi but took away relevant documents, hoping to convince the king later that it would be inadvisable for him to advance his claim. However, the documents 'did not enable me to submit to His Majesty and explanation calculated to produce the effect in his mind which I wished, and I, therefore, remained silent'.

The King Ross wrote, believed that the orders of the Government dated 23 May 1805 'held out an assurance that the whole of the revenue which might be derived from the territory assigned by that resolution for the maintenance of the Royal Household would be applied to that purpose'. Ross own view on the subject is contained in paragraph 17 of his note: 'By that resolution (of 23 May 1805) Shah Alam was assured, in language which does not admit of more than one interpretation, *that no part of the produce of the territory assigned for the support of the Royal Family would be otherwise appropriated*; that such modifications of the system proposed for the management of the territory would be adopted, as might appear to be necessary to ensure *to His Majesty all the advantages which the country was capable of yielding;* and that the sum to be paid monthly from the Resident's treasury, to provide immediately for His Majesty's *personal expenses,* would be augmented to the extent of a lack of rupees, as soon as the revenues of the territory in question should be increased to an amount which would admit of it. Government, it is true, was not under any obligation to make these promises: but as it voluntarily made them, it

cannot, I conceive, evade them by contending, either, that they were not intended, or that, it was not contemplated when they were made, that the state of things in which the performance of them could be required, would ever exist'.

Shah Alam passed away peacefully on 19 November 1806. He had lived his last years frugally. His blindness had made him oblivious to the creeping shabbiness of his surroundings. He left behind 5 lakhs of rupees.

He was not an outstanding conqueror of the calibre of Babur nor a statesman of the highest order like Akbar the Great. He did not possess the capacity to influence the course of history but was sound enough to have made a benign monarch in peaceful times. In his younger years he courageously escaped from the clutches of Ghazi-ud-din and energetically tried to regain control of the distant eastern provinces of his ancestral empire. But the British in Bengal and the Marathas in western and upper India had grown too powerful for him to overcome them and perforce he became dependent on one or the other of them.

We possess two contemporary word pictures of Shah Alam: one by Jean Law De Lauriston, a French military adventurer, who knew him personally as the crown prince compaigning in Bengal and Bihar in the prime of his life and the other by W. Francklin who wrote his biography when he was sightless, old and infirm.

Jean Law De Lauriston: 'The prince must have been 36 years old. He was tall, rather handsome, but so dark that I was surprised, all the more so as I had imagined him to be of the same colour as the Moghuls or Tartars who were as white as some Europeans. But I soon learned that his father, the emperor, was just as dark, and that many princes and princesses of the Royal

Family were more or less of the same colour. This is due to the fact that the blood of the Moghuls had became mixed because they had married Indian princesses or kept them as mistresses.

This prince was reputed to have had the best education and to have made the most of it. It consisted, particularly of the study of religion, oriental languages, history and how to perform one's academic tasks. In fact, everything I have been able to observe did him credit. He knew Arabic, Turkish, Persian and some Indian languages. He liked reading and devoted a few hours to it everyday. As far as history was concerned, his knowledge was limited to what could be found in several Arabic and Persian works where for every truth there were a hundred falsehoods. Having had the opportunity of speaking to him a few times, I soon realised that he was quite capable of writing a novel, but as far as history was concerned, especially European history, he had absolutely no knowledge of it. He was curious, naturally cheerful, free and easy in manner and would often receive his chief military officers in whom he had placed his trust. On such occasions one was allowed to sit down. I have often had this honour and even the opportunity, two or three times, of dining with him, not at his table, for there was no such thing, but on his "Sofra au Daster", as it was called.

The prince who probably had never set eyes on Europeans before remained absolutely calm under our gaze, spoke little and gave me to understand that he was pleased to see us'.[47]

W.Francklin: 'Shah-Aulum, nominal Emperor of Hindostan, is in his 75th year. His stature tall and commanding, his aspect dignified and majestic. The ravages of time are discernible on his face, and the recollection of his misfortunes have impressed his features with melancholy... Shah-Aulum had improved a

very good education by study and reflection; he was a complete master of the languages of the east, and as a writer, attained an eminence seldom acquired by persons in his high station. His correspondence with the different princes of the country, during a very long and chequered reign, exhibits proofs of a mind highly cultivated... In the internal economy of his household, he is universally allowed to be an affectionate parent, a kind master and a generous patron...Upon a review of his life and actions it may, without injustice, be pronounced that though Shah-Aulum possessed not a capacity sufficiently vigorous to renovate the springs of a relaxed Government, or to emulate his illustrious ancestors, he, notwithstanding, had may virtues commendable in a private station; but he unfortunately reigned at a time when the royal authority was in a most degraded state and when great shining talents were necessary to render permanent his power, and curb the licentious effusions of rebellious and disobedient subjects'.[48]

Akbar Shah II (1806-1837)

On 20 November 1806, Archibald Seton, the British resident, reported to his superiors in Calcutta that Shah Alam's eldest surviving son, Akbar Shah, had ascended the throne without the 'smallest interruption' to 'public tranquility' and had assumed the title of Akbar II. But the event did not happen without some underlying anxiety. One day before the late King's death, the resident had received information that Mirza Izzat Bakhsh Akbar's next brother, intended to claim the throne. Akbar's mother had, therefore, requested the resident to 'immediately place her son upon the throne, and thereby put an end to all competition'. Since Shah Alam had nominated Akbar as his *valiahad* (heir apparent) and the British Government had repeatedly endorsed the choice, the resident hurried to the palace

and staged the enthronement. He presented nazr on behalf of the Governor-General and himself.

Succession in the Moghul dynasty had seldom been smoothly settled. Muslim law (the *sharia*) does not provide any guidance on this crucial question because it does not envisage the system of hereditary kingship. In practice nomination by the late King, being the eldest son and having the support of the most powerful faction of the nobles were factors that counted, but in the end the issue was decided by physical force. Factionalism within the family was also fuelled by the fact that the princes were born of several different mothers. As Humayun's biographer put it: "Though much respect was paid to the members of the imperial family, as descendants of Taimur or Babur, no one individual of them was viewed with exclusive veneration as the eldest, or legal representative of the dynasty. Any of them who could command success, could command obedience'.[49]

Babur had left his late father's Kingdom of Farghana because of the hostility not only of the Uzbegs but also that of his own relatives; Humayun and Akbar had to fight against their step-brothers Kamran and Hakim respectively in defence of their throne; Jahangir had to contend with the rivalry of his son Khusrau and quell a rebellion by him; Shah Jahan had no brothers to dispute his title but he massacred all his male collaterals as a precaution; Aurangzeb, the third son of Shah Jahan had to dispose of his three brothers in order to make himself emperor. It is not surprising that the question of succession should have generated disagreements between the Moghul emperors and the British Government as well.

On 11 December 1806, princess Katalch Sultan Begam petitioned the British Government that the rightful successor to Shah Alam was her son Jawan

Bakht because he was the son of Shah Alam's eldest son, Jahandar Shah (who had predeceased Shah Alam). The claim was rejected first because 'the provisions of Mahomedan law... do not permit the grandson to derive any inheritance immediately from his grandfather, but, in the event of a father surviving his son, expressly exclude the grandson from the benefit of all inheritance' and secondly because Shah Alam had designated Akbar Shah as his successor to the throne.[50]

Akbar Shah was not young when he became king[51] but he was in full possession of his faculties and determined to pursue his claims vigorously. His problem was that he was swimming against the tide; the British were becoming increasingly intent on whittling down marks of Moghul sovereignty.

Spear thinks the explanation for the change in British policy lies in the fact that 'the utilitarian spirit was silently creeping into British ranks' and therefore 'the possession of the Moghul name which to Wellesley had seemed worth so much, came to be regarded more and more as an encumbrance...The officials who had before debated on means of improving the king's condition were now coming to say, "to what purpose is this waste?''.[52]

In fact the change in British policy was the natural result of the leap forward in British prestige and power in Europe and India. Britain had played a decisive role in the Napoleonic wars. Its army had performed splendidly, its navy ruled the waves, and the industrial revolution had made it the wealthiest nation on earth. It was fast becoming the first super-power in modern times.[53] Though the Directors of the East India Company were inclined to hold no to their mercantile moorings, the people and parliament were no longer hesitant to done the mantle of imperialism.[54]

By declaring the East India Company's possessions in India as British Territories in India",[55] the Act of 1813 asserted British sovereignty for the first time and the entries in the *Private Journal* of Hastings,[56] who arrived as Governor-General in the same year, manifest the new spirit:

> In our treaties with them [the native princes] we recognize them as independent sovereigns. Then we send a resident to their courts. Instead of acting in the character of ambassador, he assumes the functions of a dictator; interferes in all their private concerns; countenances refractory subjects against them: and makes the most ostentatious exhibition of this authority (1 February, 1814).[57]

> Our object ought to be to render the British Government paramount, in effect, if not declaredly so (8 February, 1814).[58]

> It is gratifying to me to find that Lieutenant-General Palmer, whose ability and innate knowledge of Indian affairs render his opinion important, agreed with me perfectly as to the expedience (and indeed necessity) of extinguishing the fiction of the Moghul Government (11 July, 1814).[59]

Akbar Shah showed his sensitivity with regard to matters touching his personal dignity at the earliest opportunity. During the enthronement ceremony he whispered the hope to Seton that 'the British Government would not attach to this support, any conditions which would wound his feelings or prove injurious to his dignity'. The resident reassured him that 'the British Government was incapable of making any stipulations of an unworthy nature'.[60]

Seton's behaviour seemed too deferential to his young assistant, Charles Metcalfe,[61] who wrote to a friend on 16 June 1807:

I do not exactly conform to the policy of Seton's mode of managing the Royal Family. It is by a submission of manner and conduct, carried on in my opinion far beyond the respect and attention which can be either prescribed by forms, or dictated by a humane consideration for the fallen fortunes of a once illustrious family. It destroys entirely the dignity which ought to be attached to him who represents the British Government, and who, in reality, is to govern at Dihlee; and it raises (I have perceived the effect disclosing itself with gradual rapidity) ideas of imperial power and sway, which ought to be put to sleep for ever. As it is evident that we do not mean to restore imperial power to the king, we ought not to pursue a conduct calculated to make him aspire to it.[62]

Seton's view, as interpreted by Metcalfe, was that 'the most obsequious attentions do not at all hurt the Resident's dignity; and that by yielding to the King the exercise of power in small points, we shall be able to oppose him with a better grace on great and important occasions.'[63]

Metcalfe's ideas had their logic but the time had not yet arrived for putting them into practice. Seton had taken the precaution of clearing his policy with the Governor-General. On 26 November 1806 he had sought instructions whether he was 'to continue to observe, in every respect, the same line of conduct towards his present Majesty, which has been hitherto pursued at this court by my predecessor and myself.[64] And he had been told, 'The Governor-General in Council entirely approves the principle states in the 2d paragraph of your dispatch relative to the general course of conduct to be observed by you towards his present Majesty. The credit and reputation and consequently the interest of the British Government are concerned in continuing to manifest towards the Royal family the same respect and

attention the observance of which has elevated the character of that Government in the estimation of the states and people of India'.[65] Obviously at the responsible level it was believed that British interests were still served best by adhering to the policy inaugurated by Wellesley.

Charles Metcalfe, however, continued to express his impatience privately. On 27 August 1807 he wrote: I am, at all events, for letting him [the King] see very clearly that he is a mere shadow; and if this could not be done completely without destroying even the empty name which I would wish for the present to leave to him, I would destroy even that...you will be vexed, as I am, to find that the tone, language, and behaviour of the court...have become in an increasing ratio much more ridiculous and preposterous since the accession of the illustrious Akbar than they were before.

Less than a week after Akbar Shah's coronation, the resident advised the government to forestall 'rivalship or competition' by announcing the appointment of an heir apparent. He recommended Abu Zafar, the eldest of Akbar's nine sons on the ground of primogeniture. He emphasized that the matter was urgent because the King favoured his third son who been borne by his favourite wife Mumtaz Mahal and might declare his choice. Abu Zafar's mother had died some time ago and this had weakened his influence in the palace. The Calcutta authorities assured the resident that they 'can never depart' from the principle of primogeniture and endorsed his choice of Abu Zafar. However, they did not consider it necessary to proclaim his selection at that stage. They simply authorized the resident to make their views known at suitable occasions.

The freshly installed emperor lost little time in taking up the question of the royal stipend. Replying to

the Governor-General's congratulations upon his accession to the throne, he complained that while the expenses of the royal household had gone up, his income had remained stationary and demanded the fulfilment of 'the promises which were given to His late Majesty's convenience and comfort'.

But it was the exchanges between the King and the British Government over the question of succession some months later that generated real heat between the parties. On 21 March 1807, Akbar Shah wrote that his eldest son was 'wholly devoid of every qualification' for occupying the throne and he accused him of 'an offence of a nature too delicate to admit of explanation from us'. His second son possessed 'no claim to inheritance' because he had been born out of wedlock from a slave girl. In fact his son Jahangir alone because of his 'qualifications and character' and 'high birth and disposition' was worthy of being appointed heir apparent. 'We therefore...desire...that you...will give due consideration to the points stated in this letter and execute out commands and wishes...for you may be assured that we can never consent to the succession being declared in favour of any person but that prince'. In the enclosure to the letter he declared that 'The full power in this affair has in every respect been with us, and our determination to consult you antecedently to the appointment of Heir Apparent...proceeded solely from our confidence in your anxiety and readiness to conform to our desire'.[69]

The Governor-General and his colleagues at headquarters thought that Akbar Shah was being presumptuous and they made this quite clear in their response. They reminded him that upon the death of his father, they had defended his claim to the throne because he was the eldest son. They drew his attention to the 'disinterested services' which the British Government had been rendering to his family and asked

him whether it was wise 'to reject the counsels of your most faithful servants and to prosecute measures calculated to introduce the utmost disorder into your Majesty's household'. As a sweetener they mentioned that they had recently authorized the payment of the amount which Wellesley had promised his father[70] [in lieu of the money which Sindhia had left behind and Lake had appropriated].

In a separate letter to the resident they emphasised that their reply to the king amounted to a positive refusal to comply with any of the king's recent applications and was meant to convey the expectation of the British Government 'that His Majesty will regulate his conduct by its advice...combined also with an indirect intimation, that His Majesty's future disregard of the counsels of this Government may produce the necessity of measures more conformable to the system of constraint and control, formerly exercised by the Mahrattas to His Majesty's present condition of freedom within the limits of his domestic authority'. They did not 'object to the observance of the established forms of relative rank in the correspondence...But to yield to His Majesty's assumption of a dictatorial authority over the British Government would be incompatible with its relative situation and subversive of the foundations of tranquility and good order'. The resident was directed that in future he should refuse to forward a letter from the King framed in objectionable terms and demand an alteration before transmitting it.[71]

In another letter to Akbar Shah the government advised him to listen to the advice of his 'faithful counsellors' by whose 'exertions he had been seated on the throne of his ancestors' 'rather than impose upon them commands which it is impossible for them to obey'.[72]

Akbar Shah kept repeating his demand for an increase in the royal stipend and also asked for funds to erect a monument over the grave of his father. The Government replied that the King had 11 lakhs of rupees in his treasury and his application for money to erect the proposed monument was unreasonable. However, it would consider the request for Rs.500 per mensem for maintaining the monument. The request for a higher stipend was also turned down on the ground that the existing allowance was sufficient if properly managed.

On 24 April 1807, the peace loving Seton tried to smooth ruffled feathers. He reported to government that the king perfectly realized the benefits of British power and had repeatedly declared in open *durbar* 'his conviction of the miseries which this part of the country would experience were it deprived of the protection of the British Government'. Nor was he 'insensible of the melioration, which, through the liberality of the British Government' has taken place in his own situation and that of the Royal Family'. The inconsistency between the contentment he avows and the frequent requests he makes for the augmentation of his allowance and other matters is due to the influence over him of his wife, his mother and his aunt who urge him to persevere in applications which have been repeatedly discouraged by Government. It is consistent with my knowledge that they constantly assured the king, that, to '*persist* was to *succeed.*' The resident also justified his own ultra-respectful conduct towards the king on the ground that this had 'made a favourable impression, and tended to establish in his mind, a species of influence, which under certain circumstances, might be found useful'.[73]

Akbar Shah supplemented his verbal and epistolary efforts with missions to gain his ends. He sent Shah Haji and Raja Sher Mal to Calcutta in 1808; Pran

Kishen to Calcutta in 1811; and Ram Mohan Roy to England in 1831.

Shah Haji and Raja Sher Mal arrived in Calcutta in June 1808. Since the leading role was played by the former, their mission is known as Shah Haji's mission. The Government had tried to dissuade the king from sending the mission and had agreed to receive it only on the understanding that it would be entirely of a private and unceremonious' nature.

Shah Haji's efforts were directed towards the achievement of three main objectives. He aksed for the king's personal stipend to be raised to a lakh and thirty thousand rupees a month which was stated to be the amount paid by the Marathas prior to Ghulam Qadir Rohilla's occupation of Delhi. He also sought the nomination of Jahangir as heir apparent on the new ground that the king, by the usge of the House of Timur, was entitled to appoint his own executor. And he claimed certain privileges for the king which would display his sovereignty over the British Government and the princes of India.[74]

But Shah Haji's mission ended in utter failure because the British authorities had determined that:

> To concede any points however to the king, on the representation of his private Agent, which had been rejected through the regular and established channel of official intercourse, would obviously destroy the just influence and authority of the British Resident at His Majesty's Court. Whatever therefore might be the disposition of the British Government to conceded any of the points submitted to its consideration on the present occasion to His Majesty's wishes, it is obviously necessary that the mission of Shah Haji would terminate unsuccessfully. It is also expedient that the various points which that mission embraces

should be answered through the regular channel of official communication.

And it was hoped that the 'unsuccessful issue' of the mission would induce the king to 'abandon his undue pretensions to actual sovereignty and his extravagant demands and expectation'.[75]

However, the failure of Shah Haji's mission did not deter the king from making a fresh representation soon afterwards. At the beginning of July 1808 he handed over a letter to the resident for the Governor-General. The resident thought the demands contained in the letter were extravagant and he was able to persuade the king to take it back.

Not long afterwards the king gave the resident another letter and insisted that the same be forwarded to the Governor-General. This time the resident saw no option but to comply. After a reference to Shah Haji's mission, the letter contained a solemn declaration on the part of the king of the high and grateful sense which His Majesty entertained of the service which his family had received from British nation'. It went on to state that he laboured under considerable pecuniary difficulty which he trusted the Governor-General would relieve. In his report to headquarters (13 April 1809), the resident pointed out that the language of this letter was 'much more temperate and patient...and no specific sum was mentioned'.

The resident believed that the king was relying on the orders of the British Government, dated 23 May 1805, which stated that if the revenue of the assigned territory so permitted the monthly sum for the king's private expenses would be raised to rupees one lakh per month. He told the king that the produce of the assigned territory was by no means such as to justify an increase in the stipend.

In his report to the Government, however, the resident thought there was a case for the grant of allowances to the twelve children of the king. He recommended that if provision was made for the royal children it would be wise to make some distinction between Abu Zafar the eldest son and the younger children. Abu Zafar was a man of 'very respectable character' but not being a favourite of the king was much neglected. On the other hand Jahangir of whom both his father and mother were 'devotedly fond', had a command of money which enabled him to make a great show and also fed his hopes of becoming the heir apparent.

Whatever the Government decision on the king's application was, it would be advisable to link it with the condition that none of the princes were to maintain any cavalry or armed soldiers. This would extinguish the hope of Jahangir of becoming the heir apparent. He had been entertaining a richly dressed body of horse and this 'not only give him an appearance of pomp and grandeur which throws his unattended elder brother into the shade, and fixes the attention of the community; but have the mischievous effect of feeding and fostering in his own mind that fatal sense of his right to be declared heir apparent which the partiality of his parents first created'.[76]

Lord Minto, the Governor-General, personally studied the history of the royal stipends and on 3 June 1809 wrote a minute which resulted in a Government order dated 17 June. The minute, the Government order, a letter from the Governor-General to the king and the instructions to the resident pertaining to them all reached the resident on 14 July 1809 but he did not broach the subject to the king till 24 May 1810. The king's mind being much agitated in July because of certain happenings relative to prince Jahangir, the

resident thought it prudent to wait till things calmed down.

On 7 July 1809, Jahangir had resisted the king's commands respecting the occupancy of the palace gates. In the affray some of the prince's followers and had been killed. He was put under restraint and afterwards removed to Allahabad with his father's consent. And on 16 January 1810 the king declared Abu Zafar to be his heir apparent.

The orders of the British Government dated 17 June 1809 raised the stipend of the King and the Royal Family to the monthly sum of one lakh of rupees and established a provision for the heir apparent which was to commence after the ceremony of his investiture had taken place. At the same time the resident was instructed to convey to then king 'a full and candid exposition of the real nature of his situation with a view permanently to repress those pretensions which losing sight of the actual dependence of his condition he has permitted himself to found on the complimentary recognition of his nominal sovereignty'.[77]

The resident's tactful handling of the situation paid off. When he handed over the Governor-General's letter to the King on 24 May 1810, the King seemed to be much pleased and promised to send a reply later.[78] On 5 June the resident received two letters from the king, one addressed to the Governor-General and the other to himself. In the letter to the resident, the king assured him that he had accepted the augmentation of the stipend with 'great satisfaction' and that he was highly satisfied with the Governor-General 'in every respect' and 'whatever the wishes that we will do'. He entreated that his 'dear son' Jahangir be allowed to return to Delhi.[79]

In view of the change in the king's behaviour and his agreement to elevate Abu Zafar to the dignity of heir

apparent, the resident considered it impolitic to admonish him on the lines of the Governor-General's minute and Government instructions and his conduct in this respect was approved by the authorities.

After some time Jahangir was allowed to return to Delhi on his executing a written instrument binding himself to conform to certain restrictions.

The wish to have Jahangir appointed as the heir apparent continued to linger in Akbar Shah's mind and it caused him to fall victim to tricksters. In the spring of 1811 three men - a Hindu named Pran Kishen and two Muslims, one of whom was a *maulvi*, persuaded the king, behind the back of the newly appointed resident, Charles Metcalfe, that they could achieve great things for him at Calcutta, especially in respect of Jahangir's succession, with the help of the Chief Justice, Sir Henry Russell. A letter purporting to be from the Chief Justice to the King was produced'. While the *maulvi* remained at Delhi to keep the king reassured, his partners went to Calcutta as representatives of the king and from there sent fabricated accounts of the tremendous successes they were achieving with the wholehearted support of the Chief Justice. They said further, that they would soon be sailing for London in the company of the departing Governor-General, Minto, and the former resident, Seton. The fraud was discovered when the letters from Calcutta, in which the wonderful things had been promised, fell into the resident's hands. The resident counselled the contrite king to 'relinquish that torment of his life, the worrying desire to effect impracticable things'.[80]

As we have already noted that Lord Hastings was determined to make the British Government paramount within its possessions in India. This necessitated the removal of all marks of sovereignty of the Moghul emperor over the British officials in the country.

In furtherence of his wish not to acquiesce in any ceremony which would imply his subordination to the emperor, the Governor-General avoided paying his respects to him. In his own words:

> The king had been carrying on a wearisome negotiation with him to obtain that I should visit him. Mr. Metcalfe always returned the same answer, namely, that I had expressed myself as very desirous of paying my personal attentions to His Majesty; but had told him (Mr. Metcalfe) that I was restrained from doing so by the knowledge that His Majesty expected my acquiescence in a ceremonial which was to imply His Majesty's being the liege Lord of the British possessions. This dependent tenure, Mr. Metcalfe assured him, could never be acknowledged by me. The king tried a variety of modifications as to the particular form in which his suzerainty over the Company's territories was to be asserted; but at length, after Mr. Metcalfe's assuring him that the more or the less of the distinctions to be shown to me could have no effect where my resistance was to the admission of any foreign supremacy over our dominions, His Majesty at length gave up the hope of a meeting. This procedure on my part was dictated not more by the tenure of the recent Act of Parliament which declares the sovereignty of the Company's possession to be in the British Crown, than by a clear conviction of our impolicy in keeping up the notion of a paramountship in the King of Delhi. It is dangerous to uphold for the Mussulmans a rallying-point, sanctioned by our own acknowledgment that a just title to supremacy exists in the King of Delhi.[81]

Hastings also stopped the offering of *nazr* to the emperor on behalf of the Governor-General.[82] And Ellenborough later prohibited even the resident at Delhi from this tributory offering.[83]

With Hasting's encouragement, the Nawab of Oudh signified his independence from the Moghul emperor by assuming the title of King.[84]

On 15 February 1821, the resident transmitted to Calcutta a letter from Akbar Shah to the address of the King of England congratulating him on his accession to the throne. The Governor-General in Council declined to forward the letter to England because it was deemed that such correspondence was 'inadmissible whether considered with reference to the constitutional character of the British Government in this country or the circumstances and situation of the Delhi Court in relation to that Government'. But at the same time the resident was instructed 'in making a communication to the King [of Delhi] on the subject, to use such soothing expressions as might prevent His Majesty from conceiving that the refusal implied an intention to derogate from any of the privileges of his exalted station, or that it arose from other motives than the natural objection of establishing a novel and unusual correspondence'.

Until 1819/20 the Governor-General had used a great seal on which the titles 'Fidvee Akber Shah' or 'Vassal of King Akbar' were inscribed and had addressed the Moghul king by letter, in the humble form of an *arzee* or petition. At that time Hastings decided to discontinue the use of the seal bearing the impression described above and to substitute one which had been prepared for the Governor-General's correspondence with the princes of Western Asia. From the same time the Governor-General ceased to address any letters to the king.

This was taken by the king as an intentional slight and after Lord Amherst, the next Governor-General, had paid a visit to the king on 17 February 1827, it was considered that the correspondence should

be revived. The form would be that of correspondence between the Governor-General and the King of Persia and formerly with the King of Kabul. This would acknowledge the superior rank of the Moghul emperor as possessing kingly dignity' but would be 'free from the use of terms and phrases indicating vassalage or political dependency' and would 'proximate as near to equality as can be expected or required whilst we continue to recognize the King of Delhi as Titular Sovereign'.

Akbar Shah raised no difficulty in the way of the proposed change and the first letter in the new style was written by the Governor-General when he informed the king that Colebrook had been appointed resident in succession to Metcalfe.[85]

The visit of Amherst to the King at Delhi on 17 February 1827 took place because the Governor-General 'considered for many and obvious reasons, desirable that he should visit the king provided the ceremonial and forms of reception could be arranged in a manner which should involve nothing derogatory to the Head of the British Government'. The Governor-General 'was prepared to admit a superiority of rank on the part of the King of Delhi, as the titular and acknowledged representative of an ancient and illustrious dynasty of sovereigns'. However, it appeared to him of essential importance that he should decline to accede in person to any ceremonial, which could be supposed to admit the King of Delhi's sovereignty over the British Government or imply a tenure of our possessions dependent on his pleasure'.

The resident was entrusted with the task of negotiating the arrangements and reported that the king had suggested a plan which appeared to be satisfactory. Its principal features were that all demand for <u>nazar</u> was relinquished, a seat was to be provided for

the Governor-General in front of the throne, and the king would return the Governor-General's visit. The relinquishment of the demand for a *nazar* was regarded as crucial because it 'was a sufficient acknowledgment by the Court at Delhi, that the relation of Sovereign and Vassal had ceased to exist even in name'.[86]

On the occasion of the Governor-General's visit, the king ascended the Peacock Throne and the distinguished visitor took his seat on a state chair in front of it. No *nazar* was presented. The king took a handsome string of pearls and emeralds from his neck and placed it round that of Amherst who rose to revive the royal gift. Exactly a week afterwards, the king proceeded to the residency to return the visit and took his seat on the Peacock Throne, which had been previously placed in the principal room of the residency. The Governor-General sat on a state chair to the right. Presents were brought for the king, consisting of 101 trays of jewels, shawls and clothes of various kinds, two elephants richly caprisoned, and six horses with costly trappings.[87]

It is important to note here that, even on the showing of the British authorities themselves, the relationship between the Moghul emperor and the British Government in India now constitutionally became that between two sovereign states of equal status. There was thus no justification for the claim later at Bahadur Shah's trial that the Moghul emperor was a subject of the British Government.

Akbar Shah followed up his meeting with Amherst with a Paper of Requests which he delivered to the Secretaries of the Governor-General on 1 March 1827. Though he also asked for the restoration of some of the items of ceremonial homage which he had lost, his main demand related to an increase in the royal stipend. He relied on an agreement between the British

Government and Shah Alam (the wording of which was precisely the same as that of the 'Original Treaty' we have already reproduced at pages 29,30 and 31).

The British Government invited the comments of Charles Metcalfe, the resident, whose desire to diminish the status of the Moghul emperor has already been noted in the preceding pages. Metcalfe had to concede that the then resident had handed over to Shah Alam the 'paper' on which Akbar Shah was relying but he recommended that the King's demand for an increase in his allowance be rejected. His argument is contained mainly in paragraphs 3 to 7 of his report dated 30 June 1827:

3. The main subject for consideration seems to be His Majesty's desire to obtain a large increase to his stipend.

4. His claim is founded on an article in a paper delivered to the late King by the Resident at the Court of Delhi in 1805 not long after our conquest of the Delhi Territory from the Mahrattas: which article is as follows :-

   "All the *mehuls* to the West and North of Mouza Kabilpoor or Kaboolpoor, shall be considered the Crown Lands of His Majesty".

5. Regarding this Article, I have to observe that it seems impossible to ascertain to what districts it is applicable.

6. And respecting the document, of which it forms a part, it may be remarked, it is an intimation of the intentions of the British Government at that time, and not an Engagement positively binding as to it's future conduct.

7. For it will be easy to shew, that it was not deemed binding for even the shortest period, that it was scarcely written before it was virtually annulled

and that the British Government never did intend to enter into any compact with His Majesty, who having, in fact, come into the hands of the British Government, without power or possessions, had nothing to confer, in return for the benefits which he received, and was not master of the materials for a mutual negotiation or Treaty.[88]

Lord Amherst's Government endorsed the resident's views and decided (in 1828) 'that it was the original intention of Government to have assigned certain Mehals to the west of the Jumna, for the support of His Majesty, and the Royal Family but the plan was never, from unavoidable causes, carried completely into effect, and in 1809 the royal stipend was fixed at one lac per month'.[89]

We have already discussed this question on pages 28 to 34 and found that the denial of the king's claim to the entire amount of revenue from the assigned territories, violated a clear promise. We further, draw the attention of the reader to the following aspects of the matter:

(a) Whether the document which the resident, as the accredited representative of the British Government, admittedly handed over to Shah Alam was a 'treaty' or a 'paper' it definitely contained Government orders relating to the Moghul emperor's stipend (and they are described as 'orders' in the letter of the Chief Secretary dated 23 May 1805 to which we have referred on page 31)?

(b) The language of Articles 1 and 8, which relate to the revenue from the assigned lands, is unambiguous. Article 1 lays down that the assigned territories 'shall be considered the Crown lands of His Majesty' and Article 8 states equally plainly that, should the revenue

collections from these territories increase, there would be a proportionate increase in the king's allowance. There is no suggestion anywhere that these words denoted merely the intention of the British Government nor is there any indication that the British Government reserved the right to modify the decisions unilaterally at any time in the future.

As a matter of fact, paragraph 1 of the Chief Secretary's letter of 23 May 1805 to the resident runs as follows. 'The establishment of a permanent arrangement for the support of His Majesty Shah Alam, and of the Royal Household at Delhi having been under the consideration of the Governor-General in Council...I am directed to communicate determination of His Excellency in Council on this important question'.

And the king's complete and permanent interest in the revenue from the assigned lands is conceded in paragraph 5 of the same letter:

You will communicate this arrangement to His Majesty Shah Alam, and you will at the same time signify to His Majesty, the request of the Governor-General in council that His Majesty will be pleased to appoint a Dewan, and other inferior officers to attend at the office of Collection for the purpose of ascertaining and reporting to His Majesty the amount of the Revenues which may be received, and the charges of the collection, and of satisfying His Majesty's mind, that no part of the produce of the assigned territory, shall be misappropriated.

The resident who was administering the assigned territories had chosen to alienate a large part of the same to third persons. But this was not the fault of the king. The proper course was to compensate the king for this irregularity, not to penalize him.

In the last resort, Akbar Shah, decided to appeal to the King of England over the head of the Governor-General and he appointed Ram Mohan Roy to proceed to England as his advocate. Roy, a Bengali, was celebrated for his educational activities and for his efforts to purify Hinduism by the abolition of *sati*. On 23 February 1829, he forwarded to the Chief Secretary to the British Government at Calcutta a copy of the letter from Akbar Shah to the King of England, the original of which had already been dispatched to England.

The Moghul emperor's letter[90] opened with the following poignant words:

> Sire! My Brother! It is with a mingled feeling of humility and pride that I approach your Majesty with the language of fraternal equality at the very time that the occasion of my addressing your Majesty compels me to consider myself rather as a supplicant at the footstool of your Majesty's throne than as a Monarch entitled to assume the style and claim the privileges of royalty.
>
> Sire! I do not forget who or what I am, I cannot forget that I am a king only in name, and that I have nothing in common with your Majesty and the other sovereigns of the earth but a title conceded to me with no other effect than to aggravate the humiliation and unhappiness in which I am involved. Yet low as is my condition I have not lost the feelings of humanity and I claim from your Majesty that justice which is not denied to the meanest of your Majesty's subjects.

His main requests were that he should be given the entire revenue of the assigned territories (including arrears) and that the tokens of vassalage of which he had been deprived over the years should be restored.

With regard to the former he argued that 'the original articles of agreement are either binding or they are not. If they are binding, then any alteration or commutation of any part of the Royal income made by one party without the consent of the other to whom it is injurious, must be null and void. If they are not binding this must be either because they were never entered into which cannot be affirmed, or because some subsequent voluntary arrangement between the two contracting parting parties has superseded their obligation. But no arrangement tending to supersede the original articles of agreement has ever been voluntarily recognized by my Royal predecessor or myself, and therefore the numerous and unauthorized deviations from the provisions which they contain constitute a series of direct and systematic violations of truth, honour, and justice'.

He expressed himself' as 'willing to submit to any reasonable compromise' including 'receiving a fixed monthly sum in lieu of all future claims' in which case 'the present gross annual revenues of the *mehals* would form a proper standard, and, if they do no fall short of 30 lakhs, I hereby offer to commute all my prospective claims under the articles of convention for that yearly stipend'.

He promised not to disgrace his ancestors and himself 'by secret machinations against a power which I dare not combat in the open field' and 'as a complete security against any such attempt' promised not to retain more than 12 lakhs of rupees in his treasury at any one time and to invest the surplus, if any, in the loans opened by the British Government.

In respect of the tokens of vassalage he complained that Lord Amherst had changed the style of correspondence with him to his detriment 'All the Governors-General who have preceded Lord Amherst in

the Government of the British territories in India have thought it no degradation to themselves to address me or my august father in the style that custom has accorded to Royalty: Lord Amherst however thought proper to reduce me in his form of communication to the footing of an equal and thereby to rob me even of the cheap gratification of the usual ceremonials of address so as to humble me as far as possible in the eyes of all ranks of people'.

The British authorities in India were clearly upset that the Moghul emperor had complained to their king about their conduct. They asked the resident to 'intimate to His Majesty the surprise with which Government perused' his letter and its 'astonishment at the unmeasured and unfounded accusation which it advances against the Hon'ble Company of having violated its engagements with the Royal Family'; they upheld the decision of the resident to deny copies of the documents which the king had requested; they refused to recognize Roy as 'Envoy *[elchee]* on the part of the king' and to 'acquiesce' in the Moghul king's grant of the title of Raja to him;[91] and they suspended correspondence between the Governor-General and the king and the negotiations for a personal call on him by the Governor-General till the appeal to the English king was decided. At the same time, realizing that they had no power to the emperor, they informed him that the Governor-General had no objection to his preferring the petition.

Akbar Shah personally explained to the resident on 7 December 1831 why he had consented to receive Amherst on an equal footing.

After the king had taken his seat, he commenced the conversation which ensued by saying that in consenting to the interview with Lord Amherst, he had been influenced by an apprehension of consequences

similar to those which had resulted from the objection which His Majesty had urged to a meeting with the Marquis of Hastings on the footing then proposed attributing, as he expressly stated, to this cause the subsequent assumption by the Nawab Vizier of the title of the King, that, in the hope of obviating those consequences, he had reluctantly acquiesced in the ceremonial established by Lord Amherst, but that instead of reaping from that concession the benefits which he expected, advantage was afterwards taken of it to introduce an alteration of the Uikab, and it was from this disappointment of his hopes, that he had been induced to resort to the measure of preferring his appeal to the King of Great Britain.

Despite the rebuff from the British authorities in India, declining to recognize him as the envoy of the Mogul emperor, Ram Mohan Roy proceeded to England to plead the emperor's cause in England. Making the best of a difficult situation he wrote to Governor-General Bentinck on 29 September 1830, 'I have determined not to appear there as the envoy of His Majesty Akbar the Second but as a private individual. I am satisfied that in thus divesting myself of all public character my zealous services on behalf of His Majesty need not be abated: I even trust that their chance of success may be improved by being thus exempted from all jealousy of a political nature to which they might by misapprehension be subjected'.[92]

Ram Mohan Roy landed at Liverpool on 8 April 1831 and reached London in May. He passed away on 27 September 1833 at Bristol. He was well-received in England and conducted his negotiations with the Court of Directors and the Board of Control with marked zeal and ability. The Secretary of the Board of Control, Peter Auber, reported to Bentinck from London on 7 July 1831.

Ram Mohan Roy is one of the lions if not the lion of the day. It is astonishing what attracts John Bull, whose admiration is divided between the *prince* as Ram Mohan Roy is called and *Paganini* the celebrated violin player. Ram Mohan Roy dined with the Court of Directors at a formal dinner. Lord Caledon, Sir M. McDonald and some of the other Members of the Board together with Sir J. Malcolm were present. Ram Mohan Roy begged to propose the Board of Commissioners and then the East India Company when he really expressed himself very well, and alluded in pointed terms of gratitude to your Lordship's administration, thanking the Company for having appointed your Lordship to *reign* over them. He is full, indeed overflowing, in favour of *reform* and enters into the question with the zeal of the most zealous supporter of the bill. I have had a good deal of intercourse with him and upon one point which he has now brought before the court, the claim of the King of Delhi, I have read all the papers on the records and really there does appear to be some foundation for dissatisfaction of the part of the king. In a matter of this kind I think the Company are bound to act kindly and fairly although it may touch a little on their purses. I cannot I confess agree with the view which has been taken that there was no treaty or no specific lands assigned which can now in any way be traced with facility for in the printed regulations of 1805, 6 and 7, the exemption of certain lands from fiscal impositions is always referred to as the territories assigned to His Majesty on the right bank of the Jumna.[93]

The leaders in England being occupied with the passage of the Reform Bill and the question of the renewal of the East India Company's charter, the progress of Roy's efforts was painfully slow. Largely because of the sympathetic attitude of Charles Grant, President of the Board of Control, a dispatch was at last sent by the Court of Directors to the Governor-General

on 13 February 1833[94] expressing their willingness 'to sanction an extension of the provision at present fixed for the support of His Majesty and the Royal family to 15 lakhs of rupees per annum' leaving it to the discretion of the Governor-General 'to distribute the additional three lacs among the members of the family' in such manner as appeared appropriate to him. The dispatch stated that the decision was made in response to the Mogul emperor's claim forwarded by Ram Mohan Roy[95] but conveniently avoided a discussion of the specific points raised in the appeal on the ground that such a course would 'embarrass and impede' rather than 'facilitate a sound and satisfactory decision'. The emperor was also given to understand by the authorities in India that the grant was a 'gratuitous boon'.

The Court of Directors also wished it to be understood that the increase was to be received by the King of Delhi in full satisfaction of all claims of every description that he may be supposed to possess'. And the Governor-General's office instructed their agent at Delhi to obtain from the Moghul emperor's 'written admission to this effect'.

The king declined to accept the increase on the conditions attached to it till he had heard from Ram Mohan Roy. On 16 July 1833 he informed the agent that he had received letters from Ram Mohan Roy asking him to reject the offer as it was probable that Roy would be successful in having the claims accepted in full.

Ram Mohan had hoped that the reformed parliament in Britain would be more favourably inclined towards the Moghul king's cause. He wrote in a letter at the time, 'The case is, however, very much altered. The present Government seems very liberal, and the voice of the mighty people of England grows every day stronger in proportion to the growth of their intelligence'.[96] But his untimely death put a stop to him mission.

Finding himself in a quandary, Akbar Shah began to edge towards accepting the British offer but payment was withheld for various reasons. The king first accepted the increase in the middle of September 1834 but the British Government ruled that this was not the unqualified acceptance they had stipulated because he had alluded to the style of address to be used by the Governor-General's in writing to him and to the mode of the Governor-General's reception by him and to the mission of the late Ram Mohan Roy.

A month later the king wrote repeating him agreement but demanding payment of arrears from the period the increase had been announced so that the inconvenience arising from very heavy debts incurred by dispatching an envoy to England might be removed. He was told that he should write a letter of acceptance in which no other subject was introduced. It was also decided that the increase would be granted from the date on which his unequivocal consent was expressed.

Then followed an argument in respect of the manner in which the additional 3 lakhs were to be distributed. Among the king's objections to the distribution proposed by the British Government were that nothing had been allotted to him personally and that no provision had been made for payment of fees he had promised to Ram Mohan Roy for his services (and which he desired to be given to his sons).

With the dispute still pending, Akbar Shah passed away on 28 September 1837, bequeathing the problem to his son and successor, Bahadur Shah.

Akbar Shah possessed the vigour and strong constitution which was characteristic of the members of his dynasty but he was not as distinguished in the fine arts or literature as most of them were. However, he did have the natural dignity of a king. His relations with the British would probably have been less abrasive if he

had relied more on his own judgment and less on the advice of his mother, his favourite wife and his paternal aunt who partook in his negotiations with the resident from behind a curtain.

Heber, Lord Bishop of Calcutta, who paid his respects to him at the end of 1824, wrote, 'He is said to be a very good-tempered, mild old man, of moderate talents, but polished and pleasing manners. His favourite wife, the Begum, is a lowborn, low-bred, and violent woman, who rules him completely, lays hold on all his money and has often influenced him to very unwise conduct towards his children and the British Government'.[97]

We also have accounts by three other Europeans who saw Akbar Shah. Lady Nugent wrote in 1813 that he had very good features and a very fair complexion 'for a native'.[98] He wore his beard very long and it was white as snow. Fourteen years later Major Archer noted:

> The King appears to be upwards of sixty years old [he was actually seventy-three]: he is a remarkably healthy, strong man, exceedingly good looking, and is fairer tan the generality of the upper classes: a venerable white beard adds dignity to his countenance, while his dark intelligent eye-impresses all in his favour, and gains him credit for benevolence and goodness of heart, which amiable qualities are verified by all those who have the honour of any intercourse with him.[99]

Finally there is the description of a visit to the Royal family by Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali. She was an English woman married to a Muslim nobleman of Lucknow. She lived in India from about 1816 to 1828 and during that period visited Delhi on an unspecified date and was received in audience by Akbar Shah. Her interesting observations deserve to be quoted in full:

'After being conveyed through several splendid apartments, I was conducted to the *Queen's mahul* (palace for females), where His Majesty and the Queen were awaiting my arrival. I found on my entrance the King seated in the open air in an arm-chair enjoying his *hookha*; the Queen's musnud was on the ground, close by the side of her venerable husband. Being accustomed to Native society, I know how to render the respect due from an humble individual to personages of their exalted rank. After having left my shoes at the entrance and advanced towards them, my *salaams* were tendered, and then the usual offering of *nuzzas*, first to the King and then to the Queen, who invited me to a seat on her own carpet, -- an honour I knew how to appreciate from my acquaintance with the etiquette observed on such occasions.

The whole period of my visit was occupied in very interesting conversation; eager inquiries were made respecting England, the Government, the manners of the Court, the habits of the people, my own family affairs, my husband's views in travelling, and his adventures in England, my own satisfaction as regarded climate, and the people with whom I was so immediately connected by marriage; -- the conversation, indeed, never flagged an instant, for the condescending courtesy of their Majesties encouraged me to add to their entertainment, by details which seemed to interest and delight them greatly.

On taking leave of His Majesty very cordially shook me by the hand, and the Queen embraced me with warmth. Both appeared, and expressed themselves, highly gratified with the visit of an English lady who could explain herself in their language without embarrassment, or the assistance of an interpreter, and who was the more interesting to them from the circumstance of being the wife of a Syaad; the Queen indeed was particular in reminding me that "the Syaads

were in a religious point of view, the nobles of the Mussulmauns, and reverenced as such far more than those titled characters who receive their distinction from their fellow mortals".

I was grieved to be obliged to accept the Queen's parting present of an embroidered scarf, because I knew her means were exceedingly limited compared with the demands upon her bounty; but I could not refuse that which was intended to do me honour at the risk of wounding those feelings I so greatly respected. A small ring, of trifling value, was then placed by Queen on my finger, as she remarked, "to remind me of the giver".

The King's countenance, dignified by age, possesses traces of extreme beauty; he is much fairer than Asiatics usually are; his features are still fine, his hair silvery white; intelligence beams upon his brow, his conversation gentle and refined, and his condescending manners hardly to be surpassed by the most refined gentleman of Europe. I am told by those who have been long intimate with his habits in private, that he leads a life of strict piety and temperance, equal to that of a *durweish* of his faith, whom he imitates in expending his income on others without indulging in a single luxury himself.

The Queen's manners are very amiable and condescending; she is reported to be as highly gifted with intellectual endowments as I can affirm she is with genuine politeness'.[100]

References

1. For a fuller discussion of the Great Rebellion see Chapter 3.
2. The Mogul dynasty is called the House of Timur because Babur, the founder of the Mogul empire, was a descendant of Timur who had invaded Delhi from Central Asia in 1398.

3. Sometimes referred to as the *nawab-wazir* for this reason.

4. R. Montgomery Martin, *The Indian Empire*, Vol.I, London, not dated but 1891 or earlier, p. 303. As early as on 7 January 1759, Clive had written to Prime Minister William Pitt that he had been offered the *diwani* but that he had declined it for the present'. However, he saw 'little or no difficulty in obtaining the possession of these rich kingdoms; and that with the Moghul's own consent, on condition of paying him less than a fifth of the revenues thereof'. For text of letter see John Malcolm, *The Life of Robert, Lord Clive*, London MDCCCXXXVI, Vol. II, pp. 119-25.

5. In November 1764, Shah Alam, in a communication to Major Hector Munro, had written, 'If the English will, contrary to their interest, make peace with the Vizier, I will go to Delhi; for I cannot think of returning again into the hands of a man who has used me so ill'. C.V. Aitchison, *Treaties, Engagements and Sanads*, Vol. I, Calcutta 1931, P. 358.

6. For the text of the *Firman* see C.V. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads relating to India*, Vol. II, Calcutta 1930, p, 241.

7. J. Sarkar, *Fall of the Moghul Empire*, Calcutta 1934, Vol. II, pp. 548-49.

8. W. Franklin, *History of the Reign of Shah-Aulum, the present Emperor of Hindostan*, London 1798, p.38.

9. 'It was to prove a momentous and calamitous decision, and the misguided emperor was never again to return to British territory'. *The Cambridge History of India*, Cambridge 1929, V.p. 215.

10. Shah Alam's biographical details as authentically provided by *Mirat al ashbah [Mirror of Portraits]* by Muhammad Fakhr al-Din Husain are that he was born on 17 Zil-qa'd 1140 A.H. [15 June 1728 A.D.], ascended to the throne on 4 Jumadi al-Awwal 1173 A.H. [25 December 1759 A.D.] and died on 7 Ramazan 1221 A.H. [19 November 1806 A.D.] having lived for 80 years, 9 months and twenty days according to the Hijra calendar. These pen-portraits were compiled at the instance of the Emperor Bahadur Shah in 1267 A.H.

11. For a fuller account of these approaches see Percival Spear, *Twilight of the Moghuls*, pp.23-4.

12. Quoted by Percival Spear in *Twilight of the Moghuls*, Cambridge 1951, pp. 27-8.

13. W. Francklin, *The History of the Reign of Shah-Aulum, The Present Emperor of Hindostan.* pp.179-80. Francklin has reproduced an elegy composed by Shah Alam in Persian after the loss of his sight together with its rendering in English (pp.250-54). Its final verses read:

    Learn that imperial pride, and star-clad power,
    Are but the fleeting pageants of an hour;
    In the true crucible of dire distress,
    Purged of alloy, thy sorrows soon shall cease;
    What! though the sun of empire and command,
    Shorn of its beams, enlightens not the land;
    Some happier day, a providential care;
    Again may renovate the falling star;
    Again, O' king, raise up thy illustrious race;
    Cheer thy sad mind, and close thy days in peace.

    Francklin also makes the following interesting observations with regard to the fortitude with which Shah Alam bore his tragic fate, 'The King, however, evinced, under such accumulated misfortunes, a firmness of mind, and resignation highly honourable in his character; and it may not be unworthy to remark, that the natives of Asia in general, probably from the principles of pre-destination which they imbibe from their youth, are observed to sustain themselves under misfortune, in a manner worthy of imitation by the European chieftain'.

14. W. Francklin, *The History of the Reign of Shah-Aulum, The Present Emperor of Hindostan,* London, 1798, pp. 184-85.

15. *The Cambridge History of India V, p. 603.*

16. *Ibid.*

17. J. K. Majumdar, *Raja Rammohun Roy and the Last Moghuls, A Selection from Official Records (1803-1859*, Calcutta, 1939, pp. 320-21.

18. J. K. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, pp. 319-20.

19. P. Spear, *Twilight of the Moghuls,* p. 33.

20. J.K. Majumdar, *op.cit.*, p.1.

21. *Ibid.*, p.315.

22. *Ibid.*

23. Perron had just quitted the service of Sindhia.

24. J.W.Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War in India*, London MDCCCLXX, Vol. II, p.4.

25. Hastings, who combined the charges of Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief, waged successful wars against Nepal and the Pindaris but his most substantial success, which made the British the paramount power in India up to the Sutlej, was against the Mahrattas. Peshwa Baji Rao surredered on 18 June 1818. The office of Peshwa was abolished, his territories were annexed and he was pensioned off and permitted to reside at Bithur on the Ganges near Cawnpore. His adopted son, Nana Sahib, raised the banner of revolt in 1875 because Dalhousie had discontinued his late father's pension under 'the doctrine of lapse' Dalhousie completed the conquest of India by taking the trans-Sutlej Province of the Punjab from the Sikhs in 1849.

26. J.K. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, pp. 1,2.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

28. *Combridge History of India*, Cambridge 1929, V, p. 605.

29. F.W. Buckle, 'The Political Theory of the Indian Mutiny, *Transactions of the Indian Historical Society, Fourth Series, Vol. V*, London 1922, p.91.

30. J. W. Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War in India*, London, MDCCCLXX, Vol. II, p. 3.

31. *Cambridge History of India*, Cambridge 1929, V, p.602. To these general observations there was one exception: Tipu had styled himself as *Badshah* (great king).

32. *Proceedings of the Trial of Bahadur Shah*, Calcutta, 1895, pp. 99-100.

33. J. W. Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War in India*, London, MDCCCLXX, Vol.II, p. 6.

34. J. K. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p.2

35. For the British view of the case as narrated by Wellesley see J.K. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, pp. 316-17.

36. 'Indian opinion never regarded him [Bahadur Shah] as a rebel and always considered him to have been ill-used in his detention in Delhi and his exile in Rangoon'. P. Spear, *Twilight of the Moghuls*, p. 266.

The Muslim of India regarded the Mogul emperor not only as their political master but also as their religious head.

'The Sultan of Delhi [had] recognized the authority of a Caliph... The position, however, changed under Moghuls who considered themselves the Caliphs within their own territories'. 'As legally he was looked upon as a Caliph as well, rebellion against the monarch was looked upon as a sin by Muslim'. I H. Qureshi, The Administration of the Moghul Empire, Karachi, 1966, pp. 28,10.

37. When the Royal proclamation, announcing to the people of India the transfer of Government from the Company to the Crown, was under preparation, the queen desired that it should be written by the Prime Minister (Lord Derby) himself bearing in mind that it is a female sovereign who speaks to more than 100,000,000 of Eastern people on assuming the direct Government over them after a bloody Civil War, giving them pledges which her future reign is to redeem and explaining the principles of her Government. Such a document should breathe feelings of generosity, benevolence, and religious feeling, pointing out the privileges which Indians will receive in being placed on an equality with the subjects of the British Crown, and the prosperity following in the train of civilization'. G.W.Forrest, *A History of the Indian Mutiny*. Edinburgh and London, MCMXII, Vol.III, p. 496.

Of course, the promises contained in the proclamation were not fully implemented. The bitter legacy of the rebellion and the conservatism of the bureaucracy in India made that impossible. But the declaration, widely publicized in all the Indian languages, earned much affection and respect for the queen personally.

38. The 'presents' were the customary nazr of which the dictionary meaning is 'vows, promises made to God'. According to Court etiquette the meaning of a person tendering a nazr was that he acknowledged the monarch as his Lord. If the ruler wished to honour the subject he bestowed a *Khilat* (robe of honour) on him.

Lake's visit to the emperor on 16 September was described by Lake himself in a letter to Wellesley on the following day.

39. R.Bosworth Smith, *Life of Lord Lawrence,* Vol. I, London 1885, p. 35.

40. Despatch dated 12 April 1804 from the Governor-General in Council to the Court of Directors the full text of which is given in J.K. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, at pp. 313-18. This grant of 6 lakhs should not be confused with the 5 lakhs belonging to Sindhia which had been left with the royal treasurer and

which Lake had appropriated. Wellesley had promised to pay to Shah Alam the equivalent of that amount but it is clear from Shah Alam's complaint which the resident forwarded to the Governor-General on 1 July 1805 that the said sum had 'not yet reached the Presence'. J. K. Majumdar, *op. cit.,* 37. The promised sum was finally paid to Shah Alam's son and successor Akbar Shah II, see J.K. Majumdar, *op. cit.,* p. 69.

41. For text see *Treaty with the King of Delhi,* published by John Nichols, London 1831. (Papers connected with the Mission of Ram Mohan Rai to England in reference to the pecuniary claims of the King of Delhi, pp. 607-652).

42. J. K. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-31.

43. The Royal family consisted of the King, his children and their families and the king's close relatives such as brothers and nephews. The host of more distant relatives, descended from former Mogul emperor, were called the *salatin.*

44. J.K. Majumdar, *op. cit.,* p.38.

45. 'The estates assigned to the king for his sustenance, had so far benefitted from the peace and order consequent upon English administration that the revenue collections, which in 1803 were some £ 41,058 in 1804 had increased to £ 145,754'. Charles Theophilus Metcalfe, *Two Narratives of the Mutiny in Delhi,* Westminster 1898, p. 13.

46. For text of this note see *Treaty with the King of Delhi,* printed by John Nichols in London 1831, pp. 37-46.

47. Jean Law De Lauriston, *Memorie,* Paris 1913, pp. 329-30, translated from French for the authors by M. Hasan Aumeerally of the British Library.

48. W. Francklin, *The History of the Reign of Shah-Aulum, the Present Emperor of Hindostan,* London 798, pp. 195-96.

49. William Erskine, *A History of India Under Humayun,* reprinted Karachi 1974, p. 349.

50. J.K.Majumadar, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-60.

51. He was born in A.H. 1170 (A.D. 1755-56).

52. Percival Spear, *Twilight of the Moghuls,* Cambridge 1951, p. 50

53. The threat from Napolen sharply receded after his disastrous retreat from Moscow in the winter of 1812.

54. 'Time passed; and the English in India, secure in their great possessions, dreading no external enemy, and feeling strong

within them the power to tread down any danger which might arise on Indian soil, advanced with a firmer step and a bolder presence. They no longer recoiled from the thought of Empire. What had appeared at the commencement of the century to be perilous presumption, now seemed to be merely the inevitable accident of our position... Times were changed both at home and abroad, and our feeling had changed with them'. J.W.Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War in India*. London MDCCCLXX, Vol. II, p. 8.

55. The Act of 1833 went a step further and declared of the territories in question to be 'His Majesty's Indian Territories'.

56. He came out to India as the Earl of Moira and was created the Marquis of Hastings later. He was Commander-in-Chief in addition to being Governor-General.

57,58,59. The Marchioness of Butte (ed) *'The Private Journal of the Marquis of Hastings*. London. 1858, Vol. 1, pp. 47, 54 and 79 respectively.

60. J.K.Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

61. Charles Metcalfe took charge as first assistant to the resident in October 1806. He was then young man of 21.

62. J.W. Kaye, *The Life and Correspondence of Charles. Lord Metcalfe*, New and Revised Edition, London 1858, Vol. I, p.224.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 225.

64. J.K. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

66. J.W.Kaye, *The Life and Correspondence of Charles. Lord Metcalfe*, p. 235.

67. Abu Zafar eventually succeeded Akbar Shah with the title of Bahadur Shah. He was born on 28 Shaban 1189 A. H. (25 October 1775). At this time, therefore, he was 31 years of age, not 32 years old as stated by the resident. His mother's name was Lal Bai. She was Rajput.

68. J.K. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-8.

69. *Ibid.*, pp. 64-67.

70. *Ibid.*, pp. 67-9.

71. *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

72. *Ibid.*, pp. 71-2.

73. *Ibid.*, pp. 75-8.

74. For example he brought a *khillat* for the Governor-General and claimed that the king had the right to 'issue grants to all Soubahs' and to make the legitimacy of the rights of other princes and *jagirdars* dependent on 'holding commissions from the throne'.

75. For a fuller account of Shah Haji's mission see J.K. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-100.

76. For text of resident's report see J.K. Majumdar, *op.cit.*, pp. 100-105

77. J.K.Majumdar, *op. cit.*, pp.105-109.

78. For an account of the resident's audience with the king on 24 May 1810 see J.K. Majumdar, *op.cit.*, p. 111.

79. For the text of the king's letter to the resident see J.K. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-15.

80. For a fuller account of The Mission of Pran Kishen; see J.W. Kaye, *The Life of Correspondence of Charles, Lord Metcalfe,* New and Revised Edition, London 1858, Vol. I, pp. 346-49.

81. The Marchioness of Butte, *The Private Journal of the Marquess of Hastings,* Vol. I, London, 1859, pp. 318-19.

82. *The Cambridge History of India,* Vol. V, 1929, p. 605.

83. 'Nazzers and formerly been presented by the Governor-General and the Commander-in-Chief - by the latter, it would seem, as recently as 1837, on the accession of Shah Behaudar. See Letter of the Government of India, May 23, 1838. And in the cold season of 1842-3 Lord Ellenborough's secretaries presented *nuzzers* to the King, without any intimation to the Governor-General; who on learning what they had done, was surprised and indignant in the extreme, and put a stop to the nuzzer-giving for ever' J.W. Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War in India,* London MDCCCLXX, Vol.II, p.12 fn.

    One of the secretaries who had presented a nazr at the occasion referred to above realized afterwards that the presentation of nazrs made Queen Victoria, in Eastern estimation at best, hold her Indian possessions as a mere feudatory and vassal of the 'Imperial House of Delhi'. *Ibid.*, p. 662.

84. This made the emperor angry but did not save the Kingdom of Oudh from being annexed by Dalhousie in 1856 on the allegation that it was being misgoverned.

85. J.K.Majumdar, *op. cit.*, pp. 171-73 and pp. 189-91.

86. J.K.Majumdar, *op.cit.*, pp. 189-90

87. For the ceremonial observed on the occasion of the visit of the Governor-General to the king see J.K. Majumdar, *op. cit.*. pp. 328-29.

88. J.K. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p

89. *Treaty with the King of Delhi*, printed by John Nichols, London 1831, p.1. See also letter of the Governor-General to the king at pp. 179-84 of J.K. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, where the wording of the relevant part of the decision quoted above is exactly the same.

90. For text see J.K. Majumdar, *op.cit.*, pp. 196-203.

91. The British Government had restricted the grant of titles and *Khilats* by the king to his retainers but this did not stop nobles and others from soliciting the minor the king from conferring them on persons of his own choice.

92. C.H. Philiphs, ed., *The Correspondence of Lord William Cavendish Bentinck Governor-General of India* 1828-1835, Oxford University Press, 1977, Vol. II, *p.* 518.

93. *Ibid.*, p.659.

94. For text of dispatch see *ibid.*, pp. 998-99.

95. J.W.Kaye is manifestly wrong instating that 'As the envoy of the Mogul he [Ram Mohan Roy] accomplished nothing'. J.W.Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War*, Vol. II, p. 11.

96. J.K. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. lix.

97. Right Rev. Rev. Reginald Heber, *Narrative of a Journey Through the Upper Provinces of India*, *London* MDCCCXXVIII, Vol. I, p. 568.

98. Lady Maria Nugent, *Journal of Residence in India*, Vol. I, p. 423. Quoted by Percival Spear *Twilight of the Moghuls*, Cambridge, 1951, p. 67.

99. Major Archer, *Tours in Upper India*, 1833, Vol II, p. 114, quoted by Percival Spear in *Twilight of the Moghuls*, Cambridge, 1951, p. 67.

100. Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmans of India*, Karachi, 1974, pp. 290-92.

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2

Bahadur Shah II

The Pre-Rebellion Period (1837-57)

I. Bahadur Shah and the British

Upon the death of his father, the heir apparent Mirza Abu Zafar ascended the throne assuming the titles Abul Muzaffar Siraj al-Din Muhammad Bahadur Shah Badshah Ghazi.

His first brush with the British Government took place early in 1838 when the Governor-General informed his agent at Delhi that he intended to visit Delhi and would like to wait on the Moghul king if the reception could be arranged on terms of perfect equality, and if no nazr or other mark of inferiority was required on the part of the Governor-General. The agent sounded the King and proposed to him that the presentation of 101 trays by the Governor-General should be dispensed with. The king however, refused to deviate in the least from the ceremonial which had been practised in the interview between Lord Amherst and Akbar Shah. The proposal, therefore, was dropped by the Governor-General.

With regard to the proposed addition of three lakhs per annum to the stipend, Bahadur Shah followed the line of his father and declined the offer because of



Bahadur Shah as Emperor

the conditions annexed to it. His main objection concerned the stipulation that he must execute a deed purporting to forego all further claims. He pointed out that no agreements to renounce claims had been demanded from his predecessors when their allowances were increased. And in a letter to the Governor-General's agent at Delhi, dated 1 August 1838, he advanced these further reasons:

> It is an old established custom with sovereigns in mutual amity, at all times to assist each other, in such case therefore, how can we execute a Deed of acquittance, resigning all the claims which we may consider ourselves to possess, besides the stipendiary increase is adjudged to be distributed among the Descendants of Tymoor, and nothing allowed for His Majesty's personal use consequently the inconvenience experienced by His Majesty and immediate Descendants, remains unaltered. The encreased amount will serve to remove the distress of the Tymoor Family at present, but in about ten or fifteen years hence, their families well naturally increase, and then the same distress will be experienced as at present'.[1]

The British Government thereupon concluded the king had declined the offered benefit.

Bahadur Shah now decided to follow the example of his father. Just as Akbar Shah had taken his case to the King of England through Ram Mohan Roy, Bahadur Shah forwarded an appeal to Queen Victoria through George Thompson, who was well-known for his advocacy of the rights of the coloured people. Thompson had come to India on a philanthropic mission. While in Calcutta he received an offer from the Moghul king to act as his agent to bring his grievances to the notice of the British Government in the United Kingdom. He arrived in

Delhi in July 1843 and left on 7 November after conferring with the king.

Thompson carried a letter from Bahadur Shah to Queen Victoria in which he appealed for her support in having his grievances redressed by her Government:

> Although from unfortunate circumstances the flower of my kingdom has faded, and the Dominion of this House is placed in your hands, and under your Majesty's authority, with the power either to diminish or to enhance its dignity, its respect and its glory, yet I confidently hope from the love of justice which God Almighty had implanted in your Majesty's noble mind, that the ancient customs and usages belonging to the Imperial Family of Hindostan will be restored. It is your Majesty's high distinction to be the upholder of the weak and fallen, and to extend towards such your Royal countenance and succour.
>
> I am now old, and have no ambition left for grandeur. I would devote my days entirely to religion, but I feel anxious that the name and dignity of my predecessors should be maintained, and that they may descend to my children unimpaired, according to the original engagements made by the British Government. It is hoped from your Majesty's exalted character for virtue and good faith, that your Majesty will in consideration of the friendship which has so long existed between your Majesty's predecessors, and this ancient House, command your servants, under whose protection the Chiefs of India have placed themselves to give a prompt and just consideration to the representations and claims I have laid before them.[2]

The memorials detailing the specific complaints of the king were forwarded to the authorities in London through the Governor-General. They related to the two long standing matters: the Moghul king's claim to an

increase of stipend and allowances and his request for the restoration of privileges denoting his supremacy in India.

The Court of Directors communicated their decision to the Governor-General in a letter dated 4 December 1844. They rejected the request for a revival of attributes of sovereignty but authorized a modification of the arrangement for the distribution of the additional three lakhs per annum. The king was to be offered 'some portion of the amount' for his own use on the following conditions:

> 1st. That His Majesty shall consent to assign to the junior branches of the family such allowances as, with reference to the principles now laid down by us, shall appear to you to be reasonable, those allowances not to the subject to alteration unless with consent of the British representative.
>
> 2ndly. That His Majesty shall consent to the removal of his more distant relatives (to such degree of consanguinity as you may deem advisable) from the palace; and to their becoming subject in all respects to your Government and Laws. Or it might be a more palatable arrangement to the king, that we should out of the additional three lacks pay to those who may be removed from the palace the allowances not paid to them by the king from the present stipend, relieving his private resources to that amount, and exonerating him from all payments to those who would no longer be under his control. To others who have now no allowance it would be necessary that allowances should be assigned.
>
> Moreover, as the king appears to be in pressing need of an immediate sum of money for the liquidation of debts, we authorize you, if such a course would facilitate the negotiation, to add, at your discretion to the prospective increase, some

arrangement for the immediate relief of His Majestys exigencies, either by the tender of a moderate sum in present payment to the King himself, or by placing the palace building in substantial repair at the expenses of Government, or if thought advisable, by a union of both these modes.

We earnestly hope that by such an arrangement as that which we have now given you the power to conclude, this embarrassing question may be set at rest in a manner at once satisfactory to His Majesty and beneficial to the poorer members of his House.

If the proposed arrangements take effect, the Political Agent should carefully explain to the *sulateen* the motives and views of Government in relation to them; and they must distinctly understand that the provision now to be settled upon them is final, and that for any further improvement in their condition, or for the means of meeting any future increase of their families they must look solely to their own exertions.[3]

The dispute regarding emoluments, however, remained unresolved because the king did not accept the terms of the modified offer.

Worse was to follow. Two remnants of Moghul glory still irked the British. As we have noted in the earlier pages, Wellesley had wished to move Shah Alam and his heir apparent to Monghyr[4] from Delhi which had been the seat of empires throughout India's long history. And Metcalfe had wished he had the power to 'destroy" the title of. King.[5] Taking advantage of the opportunity offered by the death of the heir apparent Dara Bakht, the masterful Governor-General, Dalhousie, in a dispatch to the Court of Directors dated 16 February 1849, recommended that Fakhr-ud-din, the next in descent, should not be recognized as their apparent to the kingship but upon his father's death

should be styled only as prince, and should vacate the palace.[6]

Dalhousie's proposals became the subject of a heated debate between the Court of Directors, who doubted their wisdom, and the Board of Control, who supported them. For the Board it was argued :

> The chance of danger to the British empire from the head of the House of Timour may be infinitely small; but if a Mahomedan should ever think that he required such a rellying-point for the purpose of infusing into those of his own faith spirit and bitterness in an attack on Christian supremacy, he would surely find that a Prince already endowed with the regal title, and possessed of a royal residence, was a more efficient instrument in his hands than one placed in the less conspicuous position contemplated by Lord Dalhousie and his advisors.[7]

The court had to yield to the superior authority of the Board but disclaimed

> all responsibility for a measure which they regarded as unjust towards the individual family, gratuitously offensive to an important portion of our Indian subjects, and calculated to produce an effect on the reputation and influence of the British Government both in India and elsewhere, such as they would deeply deplore.[8]

Though armed with the approval of the Board, Dalhousie, aware of the acute difference of opinion in England, stayed his hand for the time being.

In the meantime the king opposed the succession of Fakhr-ud-din and expressed a strong wish that Jawan Bakht, the eleven year old sapling, born of his favourite wife, Zinat Mahal, be declared heir apparent. With the concurrence of the authorities in India, the British Government in India recognized Fakhr-ud-din as heir to

the throne of Delhi. The terms imposed on him were that, though he could assume the title of king after his father's death, he would have to hand over the palace-fortress of Delhi to the British and take up residence at Qutb.

The question of succession, however, would not go away. Fakhr-ud-din suddenly died on 10 July 1856. The eldest of the surviving princes was Mirza Korash but Bahadur Shah renewed his insistence that Jawan Bakht be declared as the heir to the throne. Canning, who succeeded Dalhousie as Governor-General, not only endorsed the decision that the Royal family should leave Delhi upon the death of Bahadur Shah but decided also that the title of king would lapse at the same time. The substance of instructions to his agent at Delhi was :

1. Should it be necessary to send a reply to the King's letter, the agent must inform His Majesty that the Governor-General cannot sanction the recognition of Mirza Jawan Bakht as successor.

2. Mirza Mahomed Korash must not be led to expect that his recognition will take place on the same terms as Fakir-ood-deen's, and that during the king's lifetime no communication is to be made, either to His Majesty, or to any other member of the family, touching the succession.

3. On the King's demise, Prince Mirza Mahomed Karosh should be informed that the Government recognizes him as the head of the family upon the same conditions as those accorded to Prince Mirza Fakir-ood-deen, expecting that, instead of the title of King, he should be designated and have the title of Shahzada, and that this communication should be made to him not in the way of writing, negotiation, or bargaining, which it is not the intention of the Governor-General in Council to

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admit, but as the declaration of the mature and fixed determination of the Government of India.

4. A report to be made of the number of the privileged residents in the Palace; to how many the privileged would extend, if the sons and grandsons, but no more distant relatives of any former King were admitted to it.

5. The sum if fifteen thousand rupees per mensem from the family stipend to be fixed as the future assignment of the heir of the family.[9]

The gradual stripping of the emblems of Moghul sovereignty and the final decision to abolish even the nominal title of King caused deep resentment no only within the palace precincts but also in the country in general, especially among the Muslims who looked upon the Mogul emperor as their Caliph. It contributed to the growing mass of resentment that family exploded into the Great Rebellion of 1857.

After the Rebellion, Bahadur Shah was depicted as an ungrateful rebel

> but to talk of ingratitude on the part of one who saw that all the dominions of his ancestors had gradually been taken from him, by force or otherwise, till he was left with an empty title, a more empty exchequer, and a palace full of penniless princesses and princes of his own blood, is perfectly preposterous. Was he to be grateful to the Company for the condition in which he found himself? Was he to bless them for ever because Polygamous, in the shape of the British Government snatched poor blind Shah Alam from the hands of the Mahrattas, and then devoured him piecemeal? We, it is true, have now the same right and the same charter for our dominions in India that the Mahomedan founders of the house of Delhi had for the sovereignty they claimed over Hindostan; but

we did not come into India, as they did, at the head of great armies, with the avowed intention of subjugating the country. We crept in as humble barterers, whose existence depended on the bounty and favour of the Lieutenants of the Kings of Delhi; and the "generosity" which we showed to Shah Alam was but a small acknowledgment of the favours his ancestors had conferred on our race. [10]

As Spear has pointed out, certain charges against the Royal Family are 'typical of a whole school of criticism of late Moghul India':

> If the king kept up his palace, he had to much money and his allowance must be cut down; if he lived within his income, his establishment was squalid, and should be abolished. If he maintained his dignity and the traditional etiquette, he was preposterous; if he was ready to give it up, there was no need to maintain him in the Palace. If a Prince was idle and dissolute, it was proof of Moghul effectness; if he showed any signs of character, he was a danger and not to countenanced. If the *salatin* were given employment, they would be a danger to the state, their consequent enforced idleness and penury was a proof of their turpitude.[11]

With regard to the much-maligned *salatin*, E. Robinson, late Assistant Agent to the Governor-General at Delhi, in the report dated 9 February 1840 on the condition of the Royal Family, conceded that, 'It would be as erroneous, as unjust, to suppose, that these vices and defects have existed, from the first, amongst the Royal Family. For many years of the period of their decay, the younger branches were remarkable for pride of character, which rendered pride of birth respectable, and it is only since they have been allowed to multiply, uncared for, within the Palace walls, that their conduct and welfare, became of less and less interest to the Head

of the Family, as every fresh generation weakening the ties of consanguinity, they have fallen to their present pitiable, and humiliating condition.'[12]

After the Great Rebellion, Bahadur Shah began to be depicted as the villain of the piece. But it is noteworthy that before that upheaval British observers had nothing but praise for him. In recommending him to be appointed as the successor to his father, the resident on 26 November 1806 referred to him as being in every point respectable'.[13] The same official writing to his superior on 16 January 1810 informed them that 'the mild character and conciliating conduct' of Abu Zafar, the heir apparent, had 'justly rendered him a favourite with all ranks and description of people.'[14]

Bishop Heber, who saw the future King Bahadur Shah in 1824, noted that he, 'is...a respectable man, of more talents than native princes usually shew, and happily for himself, has a predilection for those literary pursuits which are almost the only laudable or innocent objects of ambition in his power. He is fond of poetry, and is himself a very tolerable Persian poet. He has taken some pains in the education of his children, and, what in this country is very unusual, even of his daughters.[15]

Even Charles Metcalfe, no friend of the Mogul royal family, had nothing but good to say about prince Abu Zafar:

> I have always advised the Heir Apparent to submit with patience to the will of his Royal Father. I must add that his conduct is in every respect highly creditable to him. He is undoubtedly the most respectable, the most accomplished of the Princes, the most worthy of His Majesty's love, and although it is withheld form him, I have never known him to deviate from the observance of proper respect and filial duty.[16]

After Abu Zafar had become the Emperor Bahadur Shah, he and his favourite wife were visited on 1 January 1850 by Mrs. Colin Mackenzie, wife of a British Lieutenant-General. To convey the true flavour of her impressions to the reader, we reproduce them in full: 'Mr. Ryley came about one, and took me to the citadel, where I made a sketch in the camera of the *Dewan-i-Khas,* where the peacock throne used to stand. No chair is allowed within the court, but Captain Robertson, who commands the palace guard, sent me one. Immediately the servants of the palace were in a great fright, and begged me not to sit on it, or they would be turned off. However, they sent a message to the King on the subject, who said I might have a stool but not a chair, and accordingly sent me a very rude little bench. Some of H.M.'s guard marched in; most of them were boys, almost children. When I had finished, I desired some of the numerous bystanders to look into the camera, with which they were greatly delighted, and as we were going, a message came from the king, asking me to show it to him. We accordingly turned back, and three or four black slaves came to conduct me into the harem.

'They introduced me to the Chief Lady, Zinat Mahal Begum, or Ornament of the Palace, who struck me as old and ugly, and then led me to the King's apartment, where the old monarch was smoking his *huqa.* He is slender and feeble-looking, but with a simple kindly face, though he took no notice of me when I came in, which I suppose is etiquette. His bedstead, with four silver posts, was by him, and a crowd of women about him; one old woman was rubbing his feet. No one was handsomely dressed. The old king wore a gold scull-cap and a cotton chupkan. I sat down for a moment, and then told them the camera must be put up out of doors. They led me into the balcony, but that would not do, so they took me to a terrace where I put it

up. The old king seemed pleased, and asked me to draw the queen, to which I willingly agreed. She was so long in adorning herself, that it was dark soon after I began. They brought out boxes full of jewels; she put on about five pair of earrings besides necklaces, a nose-ring with a string of pearls connecting it with the ear, rings for the fingers, besides ornaments for the head. Then she retired to change her dress, some of the women holding up the cotton *rezai* (wadded quilt) in which her Majesty had been wrapped, as a screen. She came back dressed in red muslin spotted with gold, and sat down *huqa* in hand, with two female servants with peacock fans, or rather *clubs*, behind her. When I looked closer at her, I saw that she could not be old, but she is very fat, with large though unmeaning eyes, and a sweet mouth. Her hair, like that of all the other women, of whom there must have been about fifty present, was *a la chinoise*. Her little son, Mirza Jewan Bakht, came and sat beside her, but as soon as I offered to sketch him, he was hurried away to change his dress, and returned clad in green velvet and gold, with a sirpesh or aigrette of jewels in his gold cap.

The noise and chattering of the assembled crowd was deafening, but the chief eunuch occasionally brought them to order and made them sit down. Her Majesty laughed very loud, as loud *as she could* with her mouth wide open, at some jest which passed. Not one of all these women were doing anything, or looked as if they ever did do anything, except three who were cracking nutmegs. What a life! The old king came in, and a man with a black beard, whom I took for one of his sons, and who remained standing, but the women sat and jested freely with His Majesty. He approved of the sketches. His little prince is he whom the king wishes to have declared heir-apparent, though he is the youngest of his ten or twelve sons. He has no less than thirty daughters.

'I was exceedingly amused with my visit, and thought how astonished you would all be to hear of my spending new year's day with the King of Delhi - the Great Moghul! When we got home, Sir Theophilus told me that the king does not give a chair, even to the Governor-General. His father gave a chair on one occasion to a Governor-General, and repented of it ever afterward! The present king, on one occasion, sent for Sir Theophilus, thinking himself near death, and commended the Begum Zinat Mahal to his care, and as she could not shake hands with him in person, he gave an impression of her hand, which she had made by covering it with turmeric, and then pressing it on paper. A day or two after, Sir T. Metcalfe received the following, a precis of palace intelligence, furnished to him, as it is to all British residents at native courts, daily. This is afterwards sent to the Governor-General and the Court of Directors. January 1, 1850 - it was reported that a lady and gentleman were employed in sketching views of the Samman Burj. The lady required a chair, and Puran Singh Chobdar was sent by the Commandant Palace Guards to procure one. The king immediately sent a stool for the lady. When the lady had finished sketching, Bilal Ali Khan, eunuch, waited on His Majesty, and spoke in high terms of the lady's talent to the King and the Zinat Mahal Begum. They requested a visit from the lady, who took likenesses of the Prince Mirza Jawan Bakht and the Zinat Mahal Begum. The likenesses not having been finished, the king requested the lady to come again and finish them".'[17]

II. The Court of Bahadur Shah

Though Bahadur Shah had no power to prevent the British Government from decreeing the termination of the royal title of the House of Timur after his death, the aura of the dynasty among the people of India remained undiminished. In fact, the emperor's gentle

disposition, natural dignity unsullied by the stress of adversity and immersion in cultural pursuits[18] evoked even greater respect and affection. No less a person than Governor-General Auckland's sister, Emily Eden, during her visit to him in February 1838 found that 'all our servants were in a state of perpetual veneration; the natives all look upon the King of Delhi as their rightful Lord, and so he is, I suppose'.[19] The people took their complaints against the British officials to the king and sometimes he would intervene on their behalf successfully. If he failed they could not comprehend why his will did not prevail against the foreign merchants'.

C.F. Andrews has drawn a picture of the Moghul court based on just those things which were told me in conversation by those who were living in old pre-Mutiny times'. We cannot do better than to present extracts from that valuable account because it will have the colour and vivid character of personal eye-witness'.[20]

'In Delhi city itself, the two communities, the Hindu and Musalman, had come to live peaceably side by side under the wise guidance of the Moghul emperors, who had learnt to trust the Hindus, and were trusted by them in return. Those of my informants who were Hindus among the old inhabitants of Delhi, told me without any reserve, when I approached them for information, that their community was well-treated under the last Moghuls and had no cause to complain. This general contentment of these later times had been a growth of centuries; and the Moghul emperors, in spite of much that can be said against them on other grounds, deserve credit for the manner in which they had overcome within themselves religious bigotry and prejudice, and on that account were able to treat their Hindu subjects with kindly consideration and a measure of impartial justice. They were also able to impress the same regard for the feelings of the Hindus upon the Musalman nobles of the Royal Court. Even if at times

there were outbreaks of mob violence among the ignorant and illiterate masses over some insult to religion, these quarrels never reached beyond that substratum of society, and the animosity created was easily allayed. The Moghuls knew how to make peace'.[21]

'Yet the poor were not sunk too deep in their poverty to lose the joy of life. Food and work were both plentiful, and there was no unemployment. The wheels of the active world of events did not go round too fast for average men and women to gain some pleasure out of human existence. They could enjoy life's panorama. Even though literary education among the masses was backward, there was a culture always present imbibed from religion. High traditions of the past were kept alive in every home by the stories of religion which mothers taught their children. An urbanity existed from close daily contact and kindly feeling which the modern rush and hurry have swept aside. Its marks may still be seen in the refined faces of the Delhi people who are the direct descendants of this old Moghul civilisation'.[22]

...'the Moghul Emperor, Bahadur Shah was already an aged monarch nearing the dotage... He was the last of one of the most distinguished lines of kings that have ever ruled upon the earth.

'In spite of has physical weakness and mental incompetence, Bahadur Shah was highly respected by the easy going inhabitants of the Royal city of Delhi. One of the survivors, who had actually seen him in his Court, told me that he was dearly loved by Hindus and Mussalmans alike for his "good manners". His very foibles and incompetences as a monarch were a part of his attraction for multitude. He was very peaceful and unwarlike. His subjects would smile at his simplicity. They knew well how ineffective he was, but they loved him all the same.

'Bahadur Shah was tolerably skilled in those fine arts for which the ancient city of Delhi was famous. The four chief of these were music, manuscript illumination, miniature painting on ivory, and poetry. The Royal Court was their patron.

'The last of these, poetry, was the one absorbing fascination for the high-born nobles, who formed a literary coterie round the emperor and joined in his artistic pursuits. They vied with one another in their verses on every public occasion. Contests were held; the most highly-praised poems were recited; prizes were awarded. The whole city was interested in these recitals to an extraordinary extent, and the fame of the prize-winners went abroad. Most of the nobles of the imperial court took part in these poetic contests. Each of them had his own literary title by which he was famous. The Emperor himself would often taken part; for he prided himself more on being a poet than on being a king.

'Meanwhile, however, in other directions, the affairs of the administration, as far as they remained within the Emperor's power, went from bad to worse. The Emperor himself became the prey of greedy courtiers and sycophants, who used to flatter him and praise in extravagant terms his musical and poetic skill in order to obtain his bounty. In this way large sums of money were extracted from him, which ought to have been used for purposes of State. The royal princes had their own way in state affairs. They quarrelled among themselves while the old Emperor sank down into senility and dotage. The whole picture of these times, outlined for my information by those who in their younger days had actually been present within the Palance, was not unlike the portrait drawn by Sir Walter Scott in his novel, *Anne of Geierstein,* of the old dotard King Rene and his corrupt Court.

'The favourite outdoor sport among the nobles, within the Fort, was cock-fighting. Immense sums of money would be won or lost in gambling upon the issue of a single cock fight. Such a decadent sport as this revealed a decadent age.

'The intimate residence together side by side in the same city of Mussalmans and Hindus had brought about a noticeable amalgamation of customs and usages among the common people. In Delhi -- unlike further North in the Central Punjab and on the Frontier -- the Hindu had never been unequally matched in numbers with the Mussalmans. The Hindu influence had told especially in commerce. The Mussalmans had taken up the administration. Official posts were filled chiefly by them, with the exception of the Revenue department. I have had more convincing and corroborative evidence about this especially friendly relationship between Hindus and Mussalmans in old Delhi than I have had concerning any other factor. The information had come to me from both sides, and has been practically the same. It was evidently a feature of the city of which the inhabitants themselves were proud. These older residents whom I approached, whether Hindu or Mussalman, spoke of this fact with enthusiasm, and contrasted it with the bitterness of modern times.

'It was quite common, for instance, in those days, for the two communities to join together in different religious festivals. Hindus would go to a Muslim festival, and Mussalmans would go to a Hindu festival. This had become a natural local custom, and none but the zealots and puritans on either side raised any objection to such friendly proceedings.

'The Mussalmans had great respect for certain Hindu ascetics. There are famous Moghul paintings representing the Emperor and his Court visiting some such holy man. The Hindus, on their side, regularly

flocked to pray for temporal benefits to the tomb of a celebrated Muhammadan saint, whose grave was near the city. The tomb of Khvajah Nizamuddin, outside the Delhi Gate, was also visited on special occasions by Hindus in order to obtain a bleassing.

'Again, it was the custom of Hindu writers, who became famous in Urdu literature, and prided themselves on their knowledge of Persian, to preface their literary compositions with the sacred word, Bismillah ("In the Name of God"), as an invocation, before they began to write. Hindu children went in large numbers to the schools attached to them mosques; there they learnt both Arabic and Persian. The Persian language was especially dear to them as the language of poetry, and the Persian tradition still remains very strong in many of the leading Hindu households in Delhi. Hindus would quote Hafiz and the other Persian poets both in their own Urdu writings and in their conversation. It was probably through this medium of the Persian language that the Hindus in Delhi became attracted to the Sufi doctrines in Islam, which were closely related to their own Vedanta texts in spiritual ideals.

'On Hindu feast days the children of Hindu households would always bring their offering of food to their teachers in the mosque schools. They would invite their teachers to their families to share in their festivities, and such invitations were regularly accepted. Mussalmans, on their side, spoke of the Hindu religious festivals with great courtesy and respect, and were very particulars to avoid any offence against Hindu customs. At their social functions, such as marriages and the like, presents were invariably sent to Hindu friends, and they were asked to grace the wedding by their company. They would come to pay their respects to the bride and bridegroom and offer their presents in return. On occasions of general rejoicing, such as the conclusion of

the great Fast of Ramazan every year, congratulations would be sent by Hindus to their Mussalman friends, and these would be graciously acknowledged. The art of living peaceably with neighbours of a different religion had reached a very high level.

'The old Emperor, Bahadur Shah was most punctilious in these matters right up to the end of his life. He would pass in procession with his royal elephants, decked in their cloth of gold, and would take his seat afterwards at a special tower in the Fort, from which he could watch the crowd beneath at the chief Hindu festivals as well as at Mussalman feasts. The crowds would recognise him and make their obeisance, and thus much goodwill would be created. The Emperor, on these occasions, would give public recitations of his own verses and the people would loudly applaud.

'The Mirzas, or royal princes, delighted to ride on magnificently caparisoned horses through the streets of the city at such festival times, when the Delhi populace were on holiday together. In this way they often courted special favour from the multitude for their particular faction. The rivalries between the Mirzas became the talk of the city, and this added some excitement to an otherwise rather indolent existence. The Emperor was unable to stop these factions, because the princes themselves were headstrong and unruly'.[23]

'Through every vicissitude of fortune, whether under Mahratta rule or under the English, the Delhi people -- Hindus and Mussalmans alike-clung with faithful loyalty to their Moghul Emperors. On this point, again, the evidence that I received was conclusive. Their affection for Bahadur Shah was unchanged, however much they might deplore the weakness and corruption of his administration.'[24]

'The people of Delhi - it was generally agreed among those whom I consulted would undoubtedly have

preferred their own traditional Moghul rulers to the English, if only the Emperors had been strong enough in moral purpose to protect their city from violence and plunder. But as events finally shaped themselves, the residents of the city, during the earlier part of the nineteenth century, were not discontented. They were especially pleased that the semblance of power was still left in the hands of the Moghul Emperors. This proved to be a sound act of statesmanship which brought with its is own reward'.[25]

'The Fort, along with the palace, remained entirely free from the British jurisdiction and control. The etiquette of complete sovereignty was kept unimpaired...The old traditional respect was shown to him [the emperor], and to the princes also, whenever they appeared in public or entered the city. People riding on horseback at once dismounted and saluted'.[26]

'The finest sight in the streets, which was in a certain sense the pride of the inhabitants of Delhi in those by-gone days, was to watch the royal elephants, covered with cloth of gold, with huge gilded *howdahs* on their backs, as they were led in a stately, slow procession through the streets. The Chandni Chowk would be thronged with spectators on these rare occasions. These State elephants were especially attractive to the young. It is interesting to note that among the reminiscences of old Delhi, these elephant processions on State occasions occupied a prominent place. Those who related the story to me were themselves young children in those early days, and the gorgeousness of the scene had evidently impressed their young imaginations. Not far from the Jami Masjid was an immense well, called the "Well of the Elephants". Here the royal elephants used to be brought, each morning and evening, without their gorgeous trappings, in order to be bathed and to be given water. The

children would watch them with never-ending excitement.

'When I asked the question, whether life on the whole was happier in those days than in later times, the answer was almost invariably "Yes".'[27]

'The majority of the residents led a comfortable and easy going existence owing to the general level of prosperity within the city and the peace which had been newly established. The years were leisurely spent. Festivals were common and they were kept with great pomp and ceremonial. Processions through the city were almost daily occurrences during the marriage season, and immense sums of money were spent in wedding festivities and decorations. The daily intercourse and intermingling of the citizens in the streets were full of colour, variety and charm. Bright-coloured clothes were the fashion, and the nobles especially rivalled one another in their splendid costumes. The markets contained very few foreign goods; the country-made goods were fine in quality and not expensive. They were also remarkable for their rich dyes. The horses, on which the nobles rode through the streets of the city, had gorgeous trappings, and their were frequent cavalcades with tinkling bells and costly equipage. "You might have thought it rather tawdry", said one of my informants, "but we, who were boys at the time, can never forget its magnificence. We used to walk along by the side of the horses and join in these processions"... The nobles of the city, who were attached to the Royal Court, kept stately bullock carriages, richly caparisoned in which they went from place to place accompanied by much jolting. Sometimes one wheel of the carriage would come off, owing to the roughness of the road, and the whole traffic would be blocked. Down the middle of the central thoroughfare of Delhi - the world-famous Chandni Chowk -- ran a canal, and shady trees grew on both sides. There was a universal opinion among those

whom I questioned, that the Chandni Chowk had been spoilt by the modern improvements" that had widened the road, but covered over in doing so the water of canal. The huge clock-tower in the centre was equally disliked. "You cannot even imagine", said one old resident to me, "how stately the Chandni Chowk looked in the old days. It was the centre of the city, filled with countryware and country produce. It was very bright with colour, because many awnings were put up in order to keep off the glare of the sun. All day long, except in the early afternoon in summer, when people retired to rest, it was crowded with those who were going shopping, or wanted to have a talk with their neighbours. They wore bright colours, and this added to the liveliness of the scene. Now, everyone looks dull, and there is no variety of colours. The beauty of the old Chandni Chowk is gone, never to return".'[28]

'Some of these ancient Moghul gardens were used privately by the ladies of the Royal Court, and still bear the names of queens and princesses, such as the famous Roshanara Bagh. I was told that the Moghul Emperors were the first to introduce into North India these gardens, with running water and roses and avenues of cypresses and other trees, which give a dream-like beauty. Such gardens represented to them, amid the heat of Delhi, something of the coolness of the air of Central Asia which they had left behind. The rose especially was a favorite flower, because it reminded them of Hafiz and the Persian poets who often use it as a symbol in their own poems'.[29]

'In spite of the widespread and rapid decay that had taken place in other directions during the reign of the last Moghul Emperors, Urdu literature made great progress. This was perhaps the most noticeable event in the history of the city at that time. Old Delhi had given birth to its youngest child, namely, the Urdu language,

as a literary medium of the first historical importance'.[30]

'If the question be asked, why the English peace, which seemed thus unobtrusively to fit in with the lives of the common people, was immediately overthrown by the first earthquake shock of the Mutiny, the answer is complex. There were elements of revolt always present within the Delhi Fort itself; and underlying the acquicescence in British rule, the humiliation of subjection to the foreigners was ever keenly felt...The foreigner remained a foreigner; and the humiliation of falling from the high position of the capital of a mighty empire to the low level of an insignificant local town could not but be galling in the extreme. I have witnessed the sense of this humiliation, still intensely felt, even in a gentle and forgiving old man like Munshi Zaka Ullah himself.

'I can remember very vividly a scene in Delhi when I called upon one of my oldest friends at his house, just after a Durbar which had been held by the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, within the *Diwan-i-Amm*, or Hall of Audience, inside the Fort.

'He had only a few moments before returned from the official ceremony and laid aside his Durbar dress and was seated at ease in *pyjamas* and vest. Suddenly there came upon him while he spoke with me the vision of the days that were no more, and the memory of that Hall of Audience in the Moghul times. In the anguish of his soul he said to me openly: "Oh! to think how I have degraded myself in that royal hall today by stooping to the stranger!" His head sank down on his breast and he lost altogether the sense of my presence while the tears poured down from his eyes. A sigh came from the depth of his soul. His did not seek to hide from me the anguish of humiliation he had been through; and I could feel it in his presence as a very terrible thing.

'As far as could be ascertained by me on enquiry, the mutiny of the troops at Meerut came suddenly with a shock of vast surprise to the citizens to Delhi. The Punjab, which lay to the north of Delhi, appeared to be quite unprepared for a revolt so far-reaching and profound. There was no prolonged and hidden preparation reaching right through the Punjab.

'It was the lower provinces and among the troops enlisted further east than the Punjab and Delhi that the discontent with the British rule had reached its culminating point of open revolt. But this very fact makes it not improbable that the natural dislike of the foreigner would have smouldered on in the same manner in the Punjab and Delhi if the British occupation there also had lasted longer. For the alien nature of the British rule does not easily wear off.

'This gives rise to serious reflection. The Moghul Emperors, who came originally from Central Asia, as foreigners, into a strange country, not only acclimatized themselves, but also won the affection of the people over whom they ruled. But the alien element in British character seems almost incurably to remain, and the dislike caused by it appears to increase rather than decrease as time goes on. This foreign character of British rule seems to be accompanied by a lack of imagination which fatally wounds the warm affection, that Indians are ready to offer to the foreigner who seeks their shores, if only he has the humility and wisdom of heart to learn by intimate experience how to receive it and to return it.

'In Delhi, as far as I have been able to ascertain, there was no deep-rooted hatred of the foreigner before the Mutiny began. There was simply the natural and intelligible dislike of being a conquered, instead of a ruling people. But, even taking that into account, conditions appeared tolerable enough to the average

citizen, after a century of disastrous confusion, so as to make him unwilling on his own account revolt. It was when the soldiers, who had been recruited in the more eastern provinces, began the revolt at Meerut and marched suddenly to Delhi, that the Mutiny really began. The people of Delhi were swept suddenly away in the passionate excitement of the moment; and the prince of the royal palace, who had been most bitterly humiliated of all by the British occupation, headed the revolt'.[31]

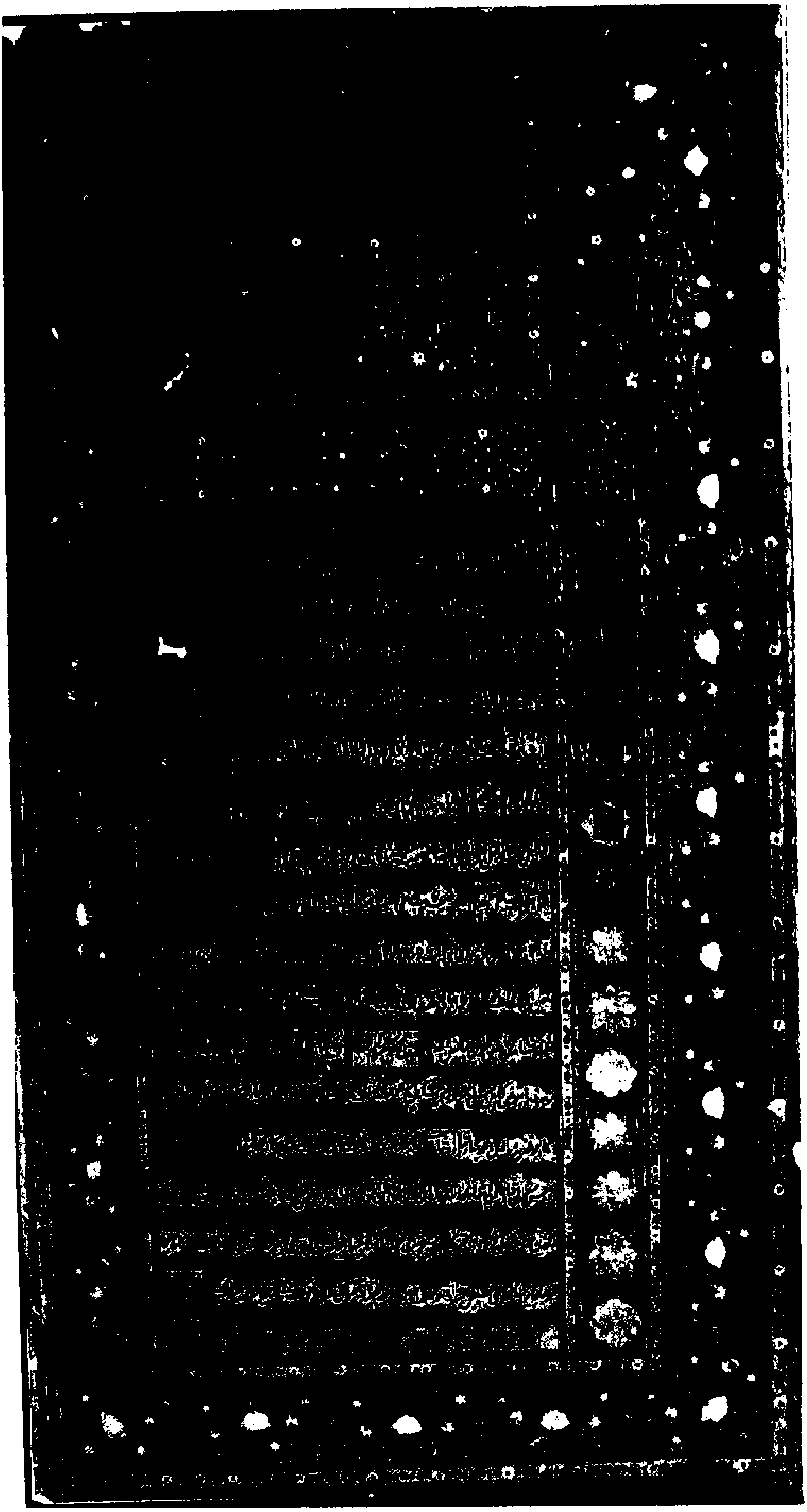
Bahadur Shah married the young and beautiful Zinat Mahal on 19 November 1840. From the very beginning she became his constant companion and most influential counsellor. She remained by his side through good days and bad, accompanied him on his exile to Rangoon, and was present at his bedside when he passed away.

The marriage was performed in accordance with Islamic law. The original *nikah-namah* is still preserved in the India Office Library and Records. It opens with the traditional sermon *(khutba)* of marriage in Arabic. It describes the bride as 'Malika-i-Zamani Nawab Zinat Begum, daughter of Samsam'd-Daula, Amir'l-Mulk Nawab Ahmad Quli Khan Bahadur Mazaffar Jang, son of Nawab Mansur Khan Bahadur, son of Nawab Shah Wali Khan Bami Zai'. Ghulam Zasir-ud-din son of Ghulam Qutb-ud-din was the bride's *vakil.*

The marriage was performed openly with the consent of the bride and the bridegroom in the presence of two witnesses. The bridegroom agreed to pay a *haqq mahr* of 15 lakh rupees of which one third was payable forthwith and two-thirds at any time during their married life. A clear signature of the bridegroom is in a box on the right margin of the *nikah-namah* next to the *bismi'llah.*



Queen Zinat Mahal



Nikahnama of Bahadur Shah and Zinat Mahal

The Delhi *Urdu Akhbar* published the following account of the marriage in its issue of 22 November 1840:[32]

> It has been learned that His Majesty had awarded the daughter of Nawab Ahmad Quli Khan the title of Zinat al-Mahal Begum and has fixed a salary of five hundred rupees for the Begam and five hundred rupees for her relatives.
>
> The heir to the throne was asked to escort the Begam to the palace but he refused to do so. Therefore, on the morning of 19 November His Majesty sent Kale Sahib (Miyan Nasir-ud-din the King's spiritual guide) Pirzade with Qazi, Mirza Shahrukh, Mirza Fakhr-ud-din, Mirza Bulaqi, Mirza Mughal and other princes, nobles and state officials to the house of the Nawab (Zinat Mahal Begam). Here the ceremonies of *nikah* between His Majesty and the Nawab Zinat Mahal Begam were performed and a dowery of seven lakhs [the correct figure was 15 lakhs] was agreed. The Nawab (Father of the bride) gave jewellery worth ten thousand rupees, four trays of cloth, one chaparkhat, one bed, thirty gold and silver utensils, three cartloads of utensils made of China, clay etc., four supporting pillows *(musnad takye)* four horses decorated with ornaments and an elephant and he also gave trays of clothes and perfumes to princes and princesses.
>
> After entertaining them to a *nauch*, the Nawab Zinat Mahal, in the company of princes and princesses departed from her house at midday. In the afternoon His Majesty gave a shawl *(doshalah)* to each one of her companions and some presents to the Nawab's employees before they departed from the palace. All princes and princesses, including the heir to the throne presented their offerings to the Queen.

The same newspaper on 29 November 1840 described how the newly-wed queen performed the ceremony of *cauthi*:[33]

Muhammad Quli Khan, son of Nawab Ahmad Quli Khan came and requested that His Majesty should send his sister to her maternal home to celebrate the tradition of *cauthi*. The King awarded him the title of Qumqamuddaulah Azizulmulk Muhammad Quli Khan Bahadur Salar Jang and gave him five pieces of cloth and three jewels and the Queen Nawab Zinat Mahal departed in a procession *(julus)* accompanied by Mirza Bulaqi. The said Begam performed the ceremonies of *cauthi* at her father's house. Nawab Ahmad Quli Khan entertained Mirza Bulaqi generously. Afterwards the queen took leave from her father and returned to the palace. She brought with her trays of dried fruit. Afterwards the ceremony of *cauthi* was performed in the palace.

To convey the flavour of court life we also quote below some other items from the contemporary Urdu press which we have rendered into English:

The King met Rajah Sohan Lal in private. Nawab Hamid Ali Khan requested that he would like to attend the *melah* of Gul Chathar. His Majesty allowed him to do so. One the 22nd of the previous month the courtiers and the princes had celebrated the festival of Basant. His Majesty ordered that everyone should come to court dress in yellow. It was a great occasion. Nearly four thousand people gathered. It looked as if it was a field of Zafaran because everyone who was present there was wearing *basanti* colour turbans and shawls. There was plenty of music and dance. The dancers were given a large amount of *inam*.[34]

To celebrate the birth of a Navazish Nawab Hamid Ali Khan invited all the *salatin*, courtiers and nobles

to a *nauch* and fireworks display. At the request of the Nawab the king also came and watched the *nauch* and the fireworks.

The King asked Nawab Hamid Ali Khan and Kunwar Debi Singh to come to an agreement regarding the distribution of salaries to the *salatin*. A man named Kalka Prashad had complained against some of the employees of the court. The king ordered that these people (against whom the complaint was made) should not be allowed into the Fort.

Mr. Anderson, incharge of the Fort presented himself before the king and reported that there were a lot of ruffians in the Fort and that the king should do something about them. The king replied that the city was full of ruffians and no one was able to clear them out.[35]

Mirza Shahrukh and Nawab Hamid Ali Khan were ordered that His Majesty does not desire that they reduce anyone's salary. If they cannot manage the accounts he would make some other arrangements. Mirza Shahrukh replied that it was well-known that his predecessor Navazish Khan had reduced the salaries. The king replied that he did not like withholding someone's rights.

The agent came to seek His Majesty's leave to go on a tour. He was given a *doshalah*. The agent presented a nazr of two ashrafis.

To celebrate the king's birthday the nobles and the princes offered nazrs. The keeper of the Fort presented five ashrafis on behalf of the agent. The king gave a roll of cloth, a head dress with embroidery and a robe of *kamkhvab* to Mirza Bulaqi and a neckless of *marvarid* to Mirza Fakhr-ud-din.[36]

On Eid day the Imam of the mosque was given six pieces of cloth, three jewels, a sword and a *partale*.

The king held his court while sitting on the *takht-i-taus*. Each of the princes offered a nazr of one ashrafi each and the Agent of the Governor-General presented 121 ashrafis to the king and five ashrafis to the heir apparent. The keeper of the Fort presented 2 ashrafis to the heir.[37]

The wife of General Ochterloney who now lives with Captain Vilayat Ali Khan presented herself before the king and offered a nazr of one ashrafi to the king and five rupees each to the queen and the heir to the throne and a robe of *kamkhvab* and five rupees to Mirza Shahrukh. She requested that the amount spent by Captain Vilayat Ali Khan while in the service of the King and Mirza Shahrukh may be reimbursed or else Captain Vilayat Ali Khan be reinstated in his post. The king replied that no one had dismissed him from his service. He should receive what he had spent in the service of Mirza Shahrukh. The king enlisted Maulavi Muhammad Ishaq in his service and had a talk with him on religious matters. On his departure the king gave him two ashrafirs, and a piece of white *pashmina* cloth and the successor to the throne, the Queen and Mirza Shahrukh Bahadur each gave him one ashrafi. A European gentleman brought all types of European goods for His Majesty's inspection. He was given a *khilat* of three pieces of cloth and two jewels. It has been learned that Mirza Shahrukh celebrated his recovery from an illness and entertained the king and the successor to the throne to a *nauch*. His Majesty visited the house of Mirza Mahmud Shah. The latter presented five rupees and a tray of dried fruit to His Majesty. His Majesty gave one shawl (*doshalah*) and a ring to his daughter who is married to Mirza Mahmud.[38]

According to a Court report Mirza Abu Bakr and other descendants of late heir to the throne petitioned

to have their salaries paid. After reading their petition the king ordered Mahbub Ali Khan that he should pay their salaries. Afterwards Queen Zinat Mahal Begam and Mahbub Ali Khan came and stated that she had called Mr. Fink to her mansion (*Haveli*) at Lal Chah eand discussed with him the case of Mirza Jawan Bakht's succession to the throne. He has promised that on reaching Calcutta he would satisfactorily and properly arrange to have the succession transferred to Mirza Jawan Bakht and that in the past he had won a number of Court cases in London and Calcutta. He demanded one thousand rupees per month and five months pay in advance.[39]

Khabar Ajenti Delhi [news from the office of the agent Delhi]

Aminuddaulah Simon Fraser ordered Munshi Jiwan Lal that he should go and tell Mirza Qoyash Bahadur that he has borrowed thousands of rupees in the hope that he will be appointed heir to the throne. Such behaviour is foolish. He should stop wasting money and take this thought out of his mind. God knows who will succeed the king. Thereafter Munshi Jiwan Lal came to the Fort and conveyed Simon Fraser's message to Mirza Qoyash.[40]

According to a Court report Agha Amin-ud-din, a poet from Rampur was introudced to the king by Yusuf Mirza. He presented two *qasidahs* in his praise and a *nazr* of 4 rupees. The king was delighted by the *qasidah* and in keeping with his most generous habit he gave him five pieces of cloth for his robes and 2 jewels.[41]

In the morning Ihtramuddaulah visited the king and enquired about his health. Afterwards all courtiers presented themselves before the king. A gentleman named Fink was appointed by the court officials. He has gone to Calcutta and will answer questions

relating to the claim of Mirza Jawan Bakht to the throne. He has been appointed at a salary of 1,000 rupees per month and has been paid six months salary in advance. This all has been done against the wishes of the Agent and Commissioner of Delhi. Nawab Zinat Mahal Begam who has gone to Karnal to see a *darvesh* named Mardan Ali Shah is now back in the palace.[42]

According to the court news the king celebrated the last Wednesday of the month and held a court. The Darogha of the royal jewels brought a tray full of gold and silver rings. After reciting the opening verses of the Qur'an the king put on five of the rings and distributed five rings each to his courtiers. Afterwards the king went to the Hayat Bakhsh garden in an open carriage.

The king held another *durbar* on 1 November and all the courtiers were present. The agent and Commissioner of Delhi also came and paid his respects to the king. Afterwards the king enquired about his plans. He replied that he would go on a tour of Hissar district on 3 November.[43]

According to court news the King received a letter from Mushtaq Husain from Agra intimating that Nur Ali Shah, a *darvesh* of Agra had passed away. The king expressed his sorrow after reading this message and sent an order to the Minister Ihtramuddaulah that he should send a letter of condolence to the son of Nur Ali Shah.

Gulzar Shah and Gulab Shah *faqir* of Barah Vafat came with 150 other poor people. The king gave them some precious stones, rings, rosaries and afterwards all these poor people attended a feast. On their departure the king gave 200 takkah, 2 ashrafis, seven rupees and three pieces of cloth for robes and a

diamond to Gulzar Shah and three pieces of cloth for a robe to Gulab Shah.[44]

Court happenings were formally recorded in the palace diary from which Spear has reproduced a specimen week and some other entries:[45]

Monday, 28 April 1851. Hakim Ahsanullah Khan having examined His Majesty's pulse, observed that he was very weak - and recommended that he should take no more medicine for the present. His Majesty intimated that he was of the same opinion. A petition was received from Mirza Kaus Shekoh, requesting H.M. would pardon the offence committed by Bansi Dhar, Perfumer, at which H.M. was much displeased and directed him to be put in irons. At 4 p.m. H.M. took an airing in the Qudsia Garden. Mourning *khillats* were conferred upon the sons of Maulvi Aziz-ud-din, demised.

Tuesday, 29 April. H.M. proceeded across the river on a shooting excursion. Husain Mirza Nazir reported that two children belong in to some *dhobis* in the city had been found in the *Mahal.* Bansi Dhar, Perfumer, was released on the payment of a fine of Rs. 500.

At 4 p.m. H.M. again proceeded on a shooting excursion across the river. A petition was received from Hakim Ahsanullah Khan, stating that he was prevented from attendance on H.M. by indisposition. Mahbub Ali Khan was directed to forward Rs. 200 to Kalah Sahib Pirzadah to defray the expenses of the offerings at the tomb of Maulvi Fakhr-ud-din, and also directing him to make the usual offerings at the tomb of the late Emperor Muhammad Akbar Shah.

Wednesday, 30 April. H.M. proceeded across the river on a shooting excursion. It was reported that as Ashraf Ali Khan was returning across the bridge on

an elephant one of the planks gave way, and that the animal's leg went through, by which Ashraf Ali was thrown and severely bruised. A messenger was despatched to inquired regarding him. Mirza Jiwan Bakht accompanied by Mahbub Ali Khan, took leave on their departure for the Qutab to make offerings at the tomb of Maulvi Fakhr-ud-din and the late Emperor Akbar Shah.

At 4 p.m. several *salatins* attended with their game cocks in front of the Palace to amuse H.M. with cock-fighting.

Thursday, 1 May. H.M. proceeded across the river on a shooting excursion. Mirza Jiwan Bakht returned from the Qutab accompanied by Mahbub Ali Khan and represented that they had made the annual offerings at the tomb of Maulvi Fakhr-ud-din and the late Emperor Akbar Shah. It was reported that the *zenana* people of Mirza Fakhr-ud-din residing in the Daulatabadi House in the city during the night had been robbed.

At 4 p.m. it was intimated that the royal stipend for the past month had arrived at the Palace. Mahbub Ali Khan was directed to make the usual disbursements. Several *salatins* brought their game cocks in front of the Palace to amuse H.M. with cock-fighting.

Friday, 2 May. H.M. proceeded across the river on a shooting excursion. The huntsman brought some venison, a portion of which was forwarded to Ahmad Quli Khan.

At 4 p.m. Mahbub Ali Khan reported that he had disbursed salaries for the past month. In the evening H.M. again proceeded across the river on a shooting excursion. Mirza Wali Sultan and Mirza Haji, *salatins* complained that they had not received their

allowances for the past month. Husain Mirza Nazir intimated that on the day H.M. proceeded to the home of Mirza Abbas Shekoh these two *salatins* appeared at the assembly in a state of intoxication and conversed in a very improper manner, and that they had been guilty of same impropriety several times in the Palace, on which account their allowance had been withheld. H.M. indicated that until this habit was eradicated they should receive on allowance, and observed that the practice of drinking wine should be confined to those who had command over themselves, and not to those who drank to excess. A petition was received from Babu Suri Narain Singh, reporting the demise of his brother. The officers of H.M's Writing Office were directed to register the 15th year of H.M's reign.

Saturday, 3 May. H.M. enjoyed his usual sport across the river, and on his return forwarded a *shuqa* to the Agent.

At 4 p.m. a petition was received from Mirza Wali Sultan and Mirza Haji begging forgiveness of their offence and the issue of their allowances. H.M. observed that it would be necessary to fine them in order to impress upon others the impropriety of indulgence in spirituous liquors.

Sunday, 4 May. H.M. crossed the river and returned after some sport. The Agency *jamadar* presented two boxes of opium (received from Patna), and the Agency *Vakil* after a private audience retired. Ahmad Quli Khan having presented himself was engaged in arranging matters connected with the alliance of Prince Mirza Jiwan Bakht with the daughter of Muhammad Khan of Malagarh. A *bania* complained that he had obtained a decree in this court of Rs. 100, against one Bansi Dhar, but that the royal officials would not enforce the award by the sale

of the defendant's dwelling house. Mahbub Ali Khan and Ahsanullah Khan were directed to cause immediate arrangements to be made in satisfaction of the decree.

At 4 p.m. Hakim Ahsanullah Khan presented himself, and after submitting for H.M's inspection certain papers, withdrew.

23 April. At night H.M. witnessed a *nautch* and fireworks in the courtyard of the *Diwan-i-Khas* on the occasion of the marriage of Mirza Kaus Shekoh.

24 April. H.M. proceeded across the river on a shooting excursion and on his return at the request of the Astronomer despatched a horse as a present to the *Khadims* of the Jama-e-Masjid. Mirza Badr-ud-din *Salatin* was presented with a shawl as an expression of H.M's approval of the measures he had adopted in the arrangements of the *mahal.*

A Durbari of the *Lal Purdah* became a disciple of H.M.

25 April. H.M. proceeded in state to the house of Mirza Abbas Shekoh. On the road H.M's dependents presented the customary *nazrs* opposite their respective dwellings. The Commandant of the Palace Guards accompanied H.M. to the Prince's house and then took leave. Mirza Abbas Shekoh spread carpets from the entrance at which H.M. alighted to the house, and after H.M. had passed over the servants seized upon them as their perquisites. The Prince presented 11 trays of *pashmanahs* etc. to H.M., who observed that during the time the Palace was in course of construction H.M. Shah Jahan had occupied the house they were then in, and that it was constructed of all kinds of different stones, but that they had been stolen.

26 April. In the evening H.M. officers forwarded in order that H.M. might bless the same, certain alms previous to their being distributed.

6 May. Khuluqdad Khan *Valayati* in the service of H.M. presented two bottles of *Baid Musq* and stated that he had purchased them at a cost of Rs.40. H.M. did not approve of the article and returned the same to the *Valayati,* who drank off the contents of both vials, and requested H.M. was much displeased at the proceeding and directed him to be discharged.

12 May. At 4 p.m. it was reported that Mirza Kalan, son of Mirza Kaus Shekoh, aged 17 years, had been carried off by an alligator while fishing in the Jumna. H.M. was much grieved.

22 August. It was reported that as two [English] gentlemen were on their way to the Qutab in a buggy, one of H.M. elephants happened to be returning to Delhi; that the horse shied at the elephant and upset the buggy into the ditch, but that the gentlemen managed to jump clear of the vehicle and received no injury. They were however very angry. H.M. was was much displeased at hearing this and observed that he had several times issued strict orders to the elephant keepers not to take their elephants near the gentlemen's vehicles and immediately directed the *Daroga* of elephants to be written to, to send the offender to the Qutab forthwith for punishment.

22 December 1851. H.M. inspected an elephant sent by Mirza Latif Bakhsh. The *mahout* represented that the Prince was about to proceed to Mecca and required Rs. 500 for his elephant. H.M. offered Rs. 300 and sent a message to the Prince that he had better wait and accompany him as he was determined on proceeding to the holy shrine. [He talked of this

project for two months but it was forbidden by Government.]

25 December. H.M. crossed the river and after some sport returned. Zauq, the poet, read some verses composed by himself to H.M. and in return H.M. favoured the poet with some verses of his own composition.

30 June 1852. Sukhanand, astrologer, presented an *arzi* stating that there would be an Eclipse of the moon on Thursday, and begging that the usual alms might be distributed...H.M. gave orders to bring a weighing machine, etc. on the occasion of the Eclipse.

2 July. H.M. weighed himself against seven kinds of grain, butter, gold, coral etc., and then distributed the result among the poor. H.M. inspected the rise of the river from the Nurgarh.

4 July. H.M. was told that...a European had come to inspect the Jama-e-Masjid, and broken open the lock of the *Minar* door, and mounted to the roof disregarding all their remonstrances.

We also possess an authentic eye-witness account of the life-style of Akbar Shah II and Bahadur Shah II from the pen of Munshi Faiz-ud-din. His book is entitled *Bazm-i Akhir*[46] (the Last Convivial Gathering). The introduction has been contributed by prince Mirza Muhammad Sulaiman Shah Gorgani, head of Timurid family and a son of Bahadur Shah. He confirms that the author was born and bred within the palace walls and was one of the permanent attendants of Bahadur Shah. He certifies also that the information provided by the author is accurate. The book shows that the last two Moghuls keep up the pomp and circumstance of royalty as much as their limited resources permitted.

The daily routine was that maidservants stood by with washbasins and lines before the king woke up in

the morning. When he opened his eyes, everyone paid their respects and offered felicitations. After a wash he mounted a platform and offered his prayers. The ladies incharge of the wardrobe handed over fresh clothes to him to don; the doctor-in-waiting was led to his presence by a maid and felt his master's pulse; a servant brought a refreshing drink in a sealed cup wrapped up in velvet; and the maids responsible for preparing breakfast served the dishes on a silver tray.

After eating breakfast the king made a round of the palace. He was carried in a palanquin accompanied by maids dressed in male uniforms with turbans on their heads and scarves round their waists and lances in their hands. Then followed other African, Turkish and Indian women, all carrying lances. The palace eunuchs fanned the king with large fans made of peacock feathers. The female guards leading the procession chanted, 'Beware, beware the royal palanquin approacheth'.

After making a round of the palace the king took a seat in a room in the palace. The queen sat next to him and the other wives took their places further to the right. The princes and princesses sat on the left. The palace eunuchs and maids brought in petitions from persons waiting outside and the king passed orders on them.

At the appropriate moment, the steward of the kitchen sought the king's permission to serve lunch. The king shared the meal with his wives, the princes and the princesses. The author of *Bazm-i-Akhir* describes 135 items for lunch comprising 25 varieties of bread, 25 of pulao, 35 of curries and 50 of desserts, relishes and pickles. The sound of music and the fragrance of saffron and rose water perfumes filled the air.

After the meal the king offered his prayers and retired to the bedroom. He sat on the bed, enjoyed a smoke and after about an hour took a drink of water

which had been brought from the river Ganges and had been cooled in ice. He then took a nap with female guards on duty to ensure that he was not disturbed.

On waking up he offered the afternoon prayers and afterwards made himself accessible to the people and received their petitions and prayers.

When evening approached, he showed himself at the window with military bands marching past. Diverse kinds of ornamental lamps dispelled the darkness.

After the night prayers a *nauch* and music performance was held. The king retired at midnight. Female guards as well as the doctors remained in attendance all night.[47]

The king administered justice while sitting on the throne with lawyers, judges, scribes, clerks and messengers respectfully, standing by with relevant papers in their hands. The king heard the cases and passed orders which were issued by the secretariat. The princes were addressed as *nur-i-chashm, tul umrahu* (light of my eyes, may God bless you with a long life) and the favourite nobles as *fidvi-yi-khas* (favourite servant). The people and the nobles addressed the king as *jahan panah salamat* (may God grant a long life to the protector of the world). The king wrote on the petitions that the head of the Justice Department should carry our impartial investigation and report back the case to him.[48]

He also held two kinds of darbars - *Jashn ka darbar* (the ceremonious darbar) and *mahal ka darbar* (the palace darbar).

He attend the *jashn ka darbar,* all nobles and *amirs* alighted from their carriages at the sentry's post and walked to the *diwan-i-amm* (hall of special audience). The entrance to the *diwan-i-amm* was fitted

with an iron bar in such a way that everyone had to bow when entering the hall.

The entrance to the *diwan-i-khas* (hall of special audience) was hung with red curtains. It was guarded by soldiers from the king's private regiment and the units of the king's guard, all dressed in red uniforms with black turbans carrying silver mounted clubs. On entering the *diwan-i-khas* the visitor bowed and approached the throne and bowed to the sovereign once more and retreated to the place allotted to him.

The hall was profusely decorated with hangings and carpets. In the middle of the hall on an octagonal marble platform stood the *takht-i-taus* (peacock throne) with special rugs in front of it. There were three steps to the throne which was under an arch with gold domes. At the sides of the arch were two peacocks facing each other with pearl necklaces in their beaks. In the middle of the glittering golden throne was a cushion made of Italian velvet and brocade. On either side of the throne a servant stood carrying peacock feather fans. A prayer rug was spread behind the throne. Nobles and courtiers stood on both sides with folded hands. The king's bodyguards and court criers stood further back.

In the courtyard of the *diwan-i-khas* stood the royal horses decked out in gold and silver ornaments and the king's personal elephants - Maula Bakhsh, Khurshid Ganj and Chand Murat - with painted foreheads, silk scarves, steel shields and garlands of flowers. Also lined up were the king's private regiments with the royal standards and the Abyssinian guards carrying guns and silver mounted clubs. Other regiments were lined up in the open space in front of the *diwan-i-amm* which also contained pieces of artillery.

The approach of the king was proclaimed by a female announcer and the king's arrival was heralded by the aides-de-camp with chants of 'beware, *bismallah*,

etc.' The palanquin-bearers took over the king's palanquin from their female opposite numbers and put it down near the prayer rug. The king alighted and offered his prayers. He was then carried to the side of the throne and mounted it. Standards were waved, guns were fired, the soldiers presented arms and the bands struck up.

The heir to the throne was the first to offer a *nazr* to the kings. He was followed by their princes and nobles. They were all rewarded with suitable gifts by the king.

At the end of the *durbar* the king thanked God by offering the *fatiha*. The court herald announced that the *durbar* was over and the king left in an open palanquin.[49]

The palace *durbar* was largely a family gathering. The king sat on a silver throne with a railing all around it. The legs of the throne were beautifully chiselled. The queen sat on the right laden with ornaments including a *nath* (an ornament that dangles from the nose) with a pearl as big as a sparrow's egg. Other wives took their seats next to her, all beautifully made-up and wearing *naths*. The princesses were positioned on the left covered with jewellery from head to toe. In front respectfully stood African, Turkish and other fully armed female guards and female messengers and eunuchs holding silver mounted staffs.

When the king entered the room the female crier proclaimed *khabardar* (beware). All the ladies stood up, the eunuchs removed the silk cover from the throne, the lady porters placed the royal palanquin beside the throne and the king took his seat on it.

The eunuchs fanned the king. The queen stood up and offered her *nazr* followed by other wives and

princesses in order of their rank. The king rewarded each one of them with a thick shawl.

A music and dance show followed. The dancers performed in front of the king while the musicians played their instruments concealed behind curtains. Tan Ras Khan, the head musician, then performed. The entertainment went on till it was time for dinner. The *durbar* then closed.[50]

A ladies' festival was also held from time to time. It was called *jharokon ka zananah* (festival of the ladies' balconies) because its site was the garden and river below the palace windows. At the announcement that a ladies' festival would be held, sentries were posted all along the bank of the river so that intruders could be kept out. Tents were pitched in the garden as well as on the boats on the rive. Children and women opened stalls. The princes and their wives, the princesses and their relations gathered for the festival.

The king arrived in an open palanquin carried by female porters and accompanied by eunuchs holding fans and carrying hubble-bubbles. They were followed by Turkish and African female soldiers. Everyone stood up as soon as a lady-in-waiting announced the king's arrival.

The king took a seat in the royal tent and gave permission to pluck the fruit from the trees. The ladies all made a mad rush for the trees and much fun ensued. The maids cheekily climbed the trees and ate the fruit while sitting on the branches. Some fell down, some got their feet pricked with thorns, and some were bruised by the moving branches. Those who gathered loads of fruit poked fun at those who were not so successful.

Some members of the party returned to their tents and were entertained by musicians and dancers, others went for a boat ride, yet others sat on the bank

and squirted water on one another. Some accidentally fell into the river and got bespattered with mud. All these frolics caused much merriment and fun.

Last came the fan ceremony. The king dressed himself in pink. Others followed suit and got dressed in pink from head to toe. The whole area looked as if it had turned into a pink garden. The silver fan from the Mahtab Bagh was escorted into the garden by a platoon of the *salatin* followed by a women's band and women torch-bearers. A procession including the king's palanquin escorted the fan to a *dargah* (mausoleum) and left it there as an offering. The king then returned to the palace and everyone went home.[51]

Phul Valon Ki Ser (Flower Festival)

Bahadur Shah also extended his patronage to a festival at Mehroli which had been inaugurated in the time of Akbar Shah.

Mehroli is a small town about seven *kos* from Delhi. Since the mausoleum of Khvajah Qutb-ud-din Bakhtyar is located near it, Mehroli is also popularly called Khvajah Sahib or Qutb Sahib.

The festival owes its origin to a vow made by Akbar Shah's wife, Mumtaz Mahal. Her son Jahangir had been interned by the British at Allahabad following an affray at the palace gates in July 1809. She had promised that, upon her son's return to Delhi, she would celebrate the event by covering the grave of Khvajah Shaib with flowers and holding festivities there.

When Jahangir returned his mother put a new cover on the grave of the saint and covered it with flowers. The flower sellers made a special fan with flowers for the occasion and free meals were distributed to the poor.

Akbar Shah enjoyed the celebrations so much that he decreed that the *mela* should be held every year

during the rainy season and made an annual grant of rupees two hundred for the flower sellers to make a fan of flowers.

Bahadur Shah kept up the tradition enthusiastically. He built a pavilion at Qutb and attended the festival regularly along with all his family and courtiers. According to Sir Syed Ahmad Khan nearly 1,50,000 people attended the festival and over three lakhs of rupees were spent on its arrangements.

The festival is till celebrated every year and is enjoyed by both Muslims and Hindus. The Muslims pray at the mausoleum of Khvajah Sahib and the Hindus at the nearby temple of Jog Mayaji.[52]

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2. For full text of letter see J.K. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, pp. 288-89.
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4. See pp. 19-20.
5. See pp. 63-7.
6. Lee-Warner, *The Life of the Marquis of Dalhousie.* London, 1904, Vol. II, pp. 134-35.
7. J.W.Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War in India.* London MDCCCLXX, Vol.II, p.20.
8. *Ibid.*, pp.21-22.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
10. W.H. Russell, *My Diary in India in the year 1858-9*, London 1860, Vol. II, p. 50. Russell was special correspondent of the Times.
11. T. G. P. Spear, 'The Moghul Family and the Court in 19th Century Delhi', Journal of India History, Vol. XX, 1941, pp. 49-50.
12. J.K.Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 273.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 231.
15. R. Heber, *Narrative of a Journey Through the Upper Provinces of India*, London MDCCCXXVIII, Vol. I, pp. 568-59.
16. D.R.R. Pol and Misc., Case 1, No. 3 C.T.Metcalfe to Deputy Sec. in attendance on the Gov.-Gen. 26 June 1827, quoted by P. Spear, *Twilight of the Moghuls*, Cambridge 1951, p. 73.
17. Mrs. Colin Mackenzie, *Life in the Mission, the Camp and the Zenana*, London 1853, Vol. II, pp. 70-3. She informs us also that Bahadur Shah had eighty sons and daughters (Vol. I, p. 157). She disapproved of the fact that Lord Ellendorough had forbidden the presentation of *nazrs:* 'How petty it is to fret an old man of seventy-six by refusing to allow third persons to pay him the usual mark of homage! If everyone in India brought him a Nazar what harm could it do us? On the contrary, the more reverence is shown to him the more important is he in our hands' (Vol. I, p. 156).
18. For details see Chapter 6.
19. Emily Eden, *Up the Country*, London.
20. C. F. Andrews, *Zakaullah of Delhi*, Cambridge. MCMXXIX, p.3.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
23. *Ibid.*. p. 13-18.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
28 *Ibid.*, pp. 5-7.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 31-3.
32. Vol. 3, No. 196. Translated into English by the authors.
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34. *Delhi Urdu Akhbar*, 1 March 1840, Vol. 3, No. 158.
35. *Ibid.*, 20 September 1840, Vol.3, No. 187.

36. *Ibid.*, 14 October 1840, Vol. 3, No. 189.

37. *Ibid.*, 6 December 1840, Vol. 3, No. 198.

38. *Ibid.*. 13 December 1840, Vol. No. 199.

39. *Nur-i-Maghribi*, Delhi Weekly, 11 October 1856, Vol. 4, No. 40.

40. *Ibid.*

41. *Ibid.*. 8 November 1856.

42. *Ibid.*. 25 Ocotber 1856, Vol. 4, No. 42.

43. *Ibid.*. 1 November 1856, Vol. 4, No. 43.

44. *Ibid.*. 15 November 1856, Vol. 4, No. 45.

45. Percival Spear, *Twilight of the Moghuls*, Cambridge 1951, pp. 78-81.

45. *Bazm-i-Akhir, Yani sehr-e-Delhi ke do akhiri badshahon ka tareeq-i-maashrat* (The last Convivial Gathering i.e. the mode of life of the two last Kings of Delhi), Lahore, November 1965.

47. *Bazm-i-Akhir*, pp. 14-19.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-6.

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-7.

51. *Ibid.*. pp. 61-4. The author does not give us the name of the mausoleum where the fan was taken.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 73; Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, *Asar al-Sanadid*, Delhi, 1965, pp. 293-94; Isridas' poem 'Phul Valon Ki Ser' Delhi 1876.

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The Great Rebellion of 1857

Though, at his trial, the emperor Bahadur Shah was depicted by the British as the driving force behind the Great Rebellion of 1857, that cataclysm in fact was a highly complex affair which cannot be explained away in terms of a single person or a single cause.

Bahadur Shah did have his own reasons to be disaffected with the British but there were many others who were more palpably incensed than he was and in a much better position to fight for their cause. In fact, of the prominent players in the drama he not only was the oldest and temperamentally the least belligerent but also had no standing army of his own to put in the field. He remained confined to Delhi and even there did not assume leadership but had leadership thrust upon him by the sepoys of the Bengal army who had mutinied at Meerut for their own reasons and marched to Delhi in search of a leader to give substance and legitimacy to their effort. Nor did the rebellion suddenly flop when Bahadur Shah had been captured.

All the persons and classes who rebelled had their own respective axes to grind but there was one anxiety that motivated them all, and that was the belief that the British Government was bent upon depriving them of their caste and creed with a view to making them

Christian. The sepoys had dared to be the first to take the plunge because they possessed arms and they were an organized body capable of joint action. 'It is evident', wrote Karl Marx, 'that the allegiance of the Indian people rests on the fidelity of the native army, in creating which the British rule simultaneously organized the first general centre of resistance which the Indian people was ever possessed of'.

It was commonly believed that the main reason why the British wished to conquer the whole of India was that it would make it easier for them to convert the people to the faith of their rulers. The abolition of *suttee* and the Hindu Window's Remarriage Act of 1856 were regarded as violations of the Hindu religion. Attacks on the purity of caste were seen in the regulation requiring the sepoys to cross the sea in ships, where they would be huddled with non-caste people; in the common eating arrangements in jails; and in railway travel, where the high had to rub shoulders with the low. Railways not pulled by animals and telegraph wires mysteriously transmitting messages over long distances were seen as the work of the devil.

Lord Dalhousie's Emancipation Act, 1850, which laid down that no one would be deprived of his inheritance on account of a change of religion, deeply alarmed the Hindus. Under Hindu law succession to property was linked with the duty of performing religious rites for the salvation of the deceased's soul. This ceremony could not be performed by a non-Hindu. The new law means that even during his own lifetime a Hindu could no longer disinherit a child who had abandoned his ancestral faith.

European missionaries were regarded with special suspicion. A clause in the Act of 1813, renewing the Company's charter, had set up an establishment of a bishop and archdeacon in British India. During the

debate in the commons Wilberforce had forcefully asserted, 'Our Christian religions sublime, pure and beneficent. The Indian religious system is means, licentious and cruel'.[1] And missionaries who had begun to be regularly sent to India, were openly assisted by some high officials. 'Many covenanted officers and many military men', complained Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, 'have been in the habit of talking to their subordinates about religion; some of them would bid their servants come to their houses and listen to the preaching of missionaries, and thus it happened that in the course of time no man felt sure that his creed would last even his own lifetime'. Lt.-Col. Wheeler Commanding Officer of a sepoy regiment at Barrackpore, for instance, was known to have distributed religious material among the sepoys and to have invited them to his bungalow with a view to convert them. It was thought that the missionaries would not have dared to condemn customs such as *purdah* without the encouragement of the government.

Western education, especially the teaching of English, was also suspect, and with good reason. The belief that Western education would make the Indians recognize the superiority of Christianity was not confined to the missionaries. Even Macaulay, in a letter to his father, ventured to predict that 'if our plans of education are followed up, there will not be a single idolator among the respectable classes in Bengal thirty years hence and this will be effected without efforts to proselytize'. Female education was obnoxious to orthodox Hindus and Muslims alike. The former suffered from the superstition that an educated woman was destined to become a widow and considered also that sending girls to educational institutions would interfere with the custom of early marriage. The Muslims believed that attendance at schools would lead to discarding the veil.

Sanskrit, the sacred language of the Hindus, and Arabic, the sacred language of the Muslims, were being superseded by English which had also replaced Persian as the court and cultural language of India. Muslim *madrasas* had always made religious instruction a necessary part of the curriculum but western education was biased in favour of Christian values and in missionary schools the principles of Christianity were openly taught. Some high officials visited the schools and encouraged people to enrol in them.

It is not surprising that *brahmins* and *maulvis* were amongst the bitterest enemies of British rule. Their respective religions were in danger and their own centuries-old pre-eminence in the community was threatened. For the *maulvis* the fact that a Christian power had extinguished a Muslim empire and taken its place was galling in the extreme. They believed that India had become *dar-ul-harb* (literally the abode of strife, denoting a territory not governed by Muslim laws i.e. not having a Muslim Government) after the battle of Plassey when the British defeated the Muslim Nawab of Bengal and virtually became the rulers of that principality. According to them it was sufficient that the infidel rulers were now possessed of the power to interfere with the religious observances of their Muslim subjects; whether they did interfere or not was immaterial. It was, therefore, incumbent upon the Muslims to wage a holy war *(jihad)* against the British to reconvert the country into *Dar-ul-Islam* (literally the abode of peace, meaning a territory where Muslim laws prevail i.e. having a Muslim Government). The efforts of Hindu and Muslim religious leaders greatly helped to wind popular support for the rebellion.

Dalhousie's annexation of Oudh on the charge of misgovernment created nervousness among princes of all denominations and his denial of the right of adoption was a clear violation of a ancient right exercised by all

Hindus, whether princes or commoners. A Hindu must have a son to perform his obsequies without which his soul would be condemned to perdition.

Two victims of Dalhousie's doctrine of lapse became the most prominent leaders of the rebellion. These were Lakshmi Bai, the Rani of Jhansi and Nana Sahib, the adopted son of the last Peshwa Baji Rao. The Rani's grievance was that Dalhousie had disallowed the adoption made by her husband and annexed the state. And Nana Sahib was angry because Dalhousie had refused to pay him the pension which his father had received. His contention was that since the annuity had been granted to the late Peshwa in lieu of territories ceded by him in perpetuity the pension was also due to the Peshwa and his successors for the same duration.

Land reforms, first in the North-West Provinces and then in Oudh, had proceeded on the assumption that it would be to the benefit of the exploited peasant as well as the state if the cultivator was brought into a direct relationship with the government and restored to his rightful status as a freeholder. This policy dispossessed many Talukdars and landlords who were regarded as parasitic middlemen. The laws resulting in the resumption of lands which were held free of land revenue were, according to Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, 'most obnoxious' and 'Nothing disgusted the natives of this country more with the English Government than this resumption of revenue free lands... Many lands which had been held revenue free for centuries were suddenly resumed on the flimsiest pretexts'. When the rebellion broke out the Talukdars of Oudh forcibly resumed possession of the lands they had recently lost and defended them with the help of their armed retainers.

A declaration issued on 25 August 1858 by the insurgents who had captured Azamgarh, a town sixty miles from Benares, makes an overall assessment of the

situation. Though it purports to be the proclamation of the Emperor Bahadur Shah, it must be treated as a statement representing the mutineers own point of view and as such of special significance:

> ...the people of Hindoostan, both Hindoos and Mohammedans, are being ruined under the tyranny and oppression of the infidel and treacherous English...the British Government in making *zemindari* settlements have imposed exorbitant *jumas,* and have disgraced and ruined several *zamindars,* by putting up their estates to public auction for arrears of rent, in so much, that on the institution of a suit by a common Ryot, a maid servant, or a slave, the respectable *zemindars* are summoned into court, arrested, put in goal and disgraced... [the] British Government have monopolized the trade of all fine and valuable merchandise, such as indigo, cloth and other articles of shipping, leaving only the trade of trifles to the people...under the British Government, natives employed in the civil and military services, have little respect, low pay, and no manner of influence...the Europeans, by the introduction of English articles into India, have thrown the weavers, the cotton dressers, the carpenters, the blacksmiths, and the shoemakers, &c., out of employ...The *pundits* and *fakirs* being the guardians of the Hindoo and Muhammedan religions respectively, and the Europeans being the enemies of both the religions, and as at present a war is raging against the English on account of religion, the *pundits* and *fakirs* are bound to present themselves to me, and take their share in the holy war...

In Oudh the rebellion was more pervasive than anywhere else. Resentment there was fresh because the Nawab had been deposed only a year before and his

disbanded army readily entered the fray. A large part of the Bengal Army also came from Oudh and its members were able to excite sympathy for their cause.

Once it was seen that the sepoys, the main prop of the foreign Government, had begun to crumble, all sorts of adventurers - disbanded soldiers of deposed princes, freebooters, thugs, prisoners released by the rebels and other bad characters - took a hand in the game. Some persons, who normally would have remained loyal, or neutral, came down off the fence just to be on what they perceived to be the winning side. The government treasuries at district and sub-district headquarters, full of silver rupees and guarded by the sepoys themselves, presented irresistible and easy targets. To describe such a broad insurrection at the 'sepoy mutiny' is a misnomer.

After the sepoys from Meerut had takan Delhi on 11 May 1857,[2] a series of uprisings at other places took place - at Cawnpore on 4 June and at Jhansi and Allahabad on 7 June, for example. At Lucknow, the capital of Oudh, the British barricaded themselves in the Residency and heroically defended it against overwhelming odds. At the height of the rebellion British control was totally lost in Hindustan i.e. in the North-West Provinces, Oudh and Bihar.

The deposed Nawab of Oudh being in Calcutta, his cause at Lucknow was taken up by his wife who proclaimed their minor son Nawab on 7 July. At Cawnpore the leadership was assumed by Nana Sahib who had been in residence at Bithur a few miles away. He was proclaimed Peshwa on 30 June. At Jhansi the Rani took up the cudgels on behalf of her minor son. Numerous other persons declared themselves either independent rulers or feudatories of the Moghul Emperor. The Nana Sahib and the Rani of Jhansi pleaded afterwards that they joined the mutineers

because the sepoys would have turned against them if they had refused to do so.

Everyone regarded Delhi and Lucknow as the crucial cities and Nana Shaib and the Rani of Jhansi as the leaders most likely to prevail against the British. Once the fate of these cities and these leaders had been decided in favour of the British, the rebellion became a lost cause.

Of the causes of the failure of the rebellion, the most important was the disunity of the Indian peoples. From the very first steps of the British conquest of India, far more Indians than Englishmen had fought on the side of the British. The British had defeated the Gurkhas and the Sikhs with the help of the Hindustani sepoys and during the rebellion of 1857 they were helped by the Gurkhas and the Sikhs to subdue the Hindustanis.[3]

Nor had the Indian princes scrupled to side with the British against princes of even their own denomination. No prince of any consequence made common cause with the rebels in 1857.

Most princes, including the Nizam of Hyderabad, held their peace while several visibly leaned toward the British. To the latter category belong the Sikh rulers of East Punjab, Sindhia of Gawalior, Holkar of Indore and the Raja of Jodhpur. Even in the area most affected by the upheaval, some chiefs, including the Nawab of Rampur, remained loyal to the British. Dost Muhammad of Kabul carefully watched the struggle but stood on the sidelines. The Sikh rulers of East Punjab not only rendered positive help to the British but also made it possible for reinforcements from the Punjab and the tribal areas to flow smoothly to Delhi. To assist in the re-conquest of Delhi, the Raja of Jindh personally led his contingent and the ruler of Kashmir sent 2200 men and four guns.

Territorially the British lost control over no more than about one-fourth of their Indian Empire. Only the swathe from Patna to Delhi went up in flames.

To call the insurrection of 1857 a War of Independence, as some Indian nationalists of the twentieth century have done, is manifestly absurd. Had it been a really national revolt the British would have certainly been thrown out of the country. It would have been impossible for them to bring reinforcements to the crucial points over long distances. 'There were only twenty thousand soldiers and citizens of the ruling race to quench the flames. To fan them were a hundred thousand of their own well-trained soldiers, and a population of some millions armed and in revolt'.[4] It is with the help of other Indians that the British were able to overcome the overwhelming odds. As Kaye put it, 'there is nothing more true than that the calm courage of our Native adherents enabled us to recover India from their countrymen'.[5]

In 1857 there was no Indian nation and consequently no countrywide feeling of nationalism. The recipients of western education, who later became the standard-bearers of Indian nationalism, were at this stage, tiny in number, without an organization of their own to give them weigh, and too full of admiration for the blessings of British rule to oppose it. Amongst the peoples of India, the Muslims, the Mahrattas and the Sikhs can be said to have had rudiments of nationalism. The Muslims for two reasons. First, their religion required them to form a brotherhood of the faithful and secondly, they were a minority in the land of the Hindus and this instilled a feeling of communal solidarity into them; and the Mahrattas and the Sikhs because their bitter conflict with the Moghuls had generated a religious, racial and territorial cohesion within their respective communities. But there was no feeling of all-India unity. The Sikhs and the Mahrattas would

certainly not have welcomed the revival of Moghul rule under Bahadur Shah. Nana Sahib and the Rani of Jhansi were not fighting for the freedom of the whole of India but for the restoration of the dynastic rights they had lost. The rebels were not fighting for a common cause, they were only fighting a common enemy.

Nevertheless, an event of such magnitude and emotional intensity could not but influence future developments. The horrible atrocities, committed first by the sepoys and the local ruffians and then by the British, left permanent scars on the minds of the British as well as the Indians. Hatred of foreign domination has been the cause of the birth of nationalism in many lands. The traumatic events of 1857 may thus very well have assisted the birth of nationalism in India. However, in India matters are always complicated by religion. Hindus and Muslims had risen against the British in the defence of their own respective faiths. It was, therefore, a Hindu nationalism and a Muslim nationalism toward which the upheaval of 1857 in the long run contributed. The rebellion also provided inspiration for the Indian freedom fighters of the twentieth century. They drew strength from the fact that not long before Hindus and Muslims had made common cause against the British and nearly succeeded in expelling them from their motherland.

But lack of unity among the rebels was not the only cause of their failure. The sepoys had no professional military leaders to match the British Generals. They had no central command nor an overall strategy. In the entire course of the the rebellion, the losses in terms of British soldiers amounted only to 586 killed in battle or dead as the result of wounds received.

The mutineers succeeded in creating chaos but they did not possess the capacity to restore order even in the short term let alone to make plans for an orderly

administration in the future. In the general disorder looting was common and old scores were freely settled. A favourite target was moneylenders who were robbed of their money and whose books were burnt to destroy evidence of debt. The mutineers did not hesitate to join the free-for-all and enrich themselves as best they could.

Of course, the insurgents were not following any well-laid plans and the conspiracy theory advanced by some writers had no reliable basis. Had it been otherwise, there would have been a designated military commander, a fixed date on which the rising would have taken place everywhere, instead of occurring piecemeal at different places on different dates, and they would not have chosen to fire the first shots at Meerut which was the only cantonment in India where the European force was stronger than the Indian. In a recently discovered letter bearing the date 14 December 1869, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan wrote to Sir John William Kaye, the historian of the mutiny, that, had the Meerut sepoys been given the option of resigning instead of being so severely punished for refusing to bite the new cartridges, they would 'undoubtedly have peaceably withdrawn themselves from the Company's service'. Governor-General Canning also commented on the folly of the Meerut authorities in putting the prisoners in irons on the parade ground in the presence of their comrades, 'The rivetting of the men's fetters on parade, occupying as it did, several hours, in the presence of many who were already ill-disposed and many who believed in the cartridge fable, must have stung the brigade to the quick'.[6]

Some British writers have underrated the significance of the great rebellion by calling it a mutiny of sepoys while others have held that its psychological effect has been overstated. This is due to a natural desire to show that the British occupation of India was not as widely resented by the population at large as the

latter day Indian nationalists have alleged. Moreover, it is always easier for the winning side to subscribe to the noble doctrine of forgive and forget. On the Indian mind the sanguinary days of 1857-58 left behind a lasting and humiliating wound.

To get back to the sepoys who spearheaded the revolt. At the time of the outbreak, the Bengal Army comprised 1,28,000 'Hindustani' sepoys and 23,000 Europeans. Some 40,000 sepoys hailed from Oudh, which till 1856 was a feudatory state, and the rest mostly from the North-West Provinces (later the United Provinces). Chiefly they were high caste Hindus -- Brahmins and Rajputs -- and Muslims. The responsibilities of the Bengal army covered the area from Calcutta to the northwestern frontier of India. The European element in the Indian army had been depleted by wars in Iran and the Crimea. There were 7½ sepoys to 1 European.

There had been trouble in the ranks of the sepoys several times before. The main incidents had occurred at Vellore and Barrackpore. The origin of the outbreak at Vellore in 1806 was not far different from the immediate cause of that at Meerut in 1857: the sepoy's fear that a deliberate attempt was being made to deprive them of their caste and make them Christian. Regulations had been promulgated that a native soldier shall not mark his face to denote his caste or wear earrings when dressed in uniform and a new turban was issued, the shape of which the sepoys compared to a European hat. About four hundred sepoys and more than a dozen European officers were killed. At Barrackpore in 1824 a regiment of sepoys refused to cross the 'black water' during the preparations for the naval assault on Rangoon. Some 60 sepoys were shot and two were hanged.

Subsequently, there had been disaffection during the First Afghan War and after the conquest of Sind. When ordered to march to Afghanistan, the Hindu sepoys thought they had lost caste by having to cross the Indus and go outside India and the Muslims were resentful at having to fight fellow Muslims. A Muslim subedar was shot and a Hindu subedar was dismissed for giving voice to these sentiments. With regard to Sind, the grievance resulted from the fact that during the Afghan War the sepoys had been paid a special allowance *(batta)* for crossing the Indus but after the conquest of Sind their claim to *batta* was disallowed on the ground that Sind was no longer a foreign country but a province of British India. The sepoy position was that they still had to cross the Indus. On pay day the 64th regiment threw stones at their officers and assaulted them. Thirty-nine ringleaders were apprehended. Six of them were executed and the rest of them imprisoned. Another regiment, the 34th was disbanded for refusing to march to Sind.

Between the sepoys and their British officers there was an emotional gulf. The former were mercenaries without a tradition of permanent loyalty to anyone. Their officers belonged to a different religion which permitted the consumption of pork and beef and they belonged to a different race, spoke a foreign language, and belonged to a totally different culture. The sepoys knew they could never rise to be officers and could daily see that their salaries and standard of living were much lower than those of the European soldiers. Such loyalty as existed between them and their officers was founded on personal trust and respect which could be shaken by the transfer of an officer, the lack of tact of an officer or real or imagined grievances of various kinds.

After the British conquest of the Punjab the sepoys' pride reached a new height. They boasted that

they had enabled the British to conquer India from Burma to Kabul. It was the wrong time for any thoughtless regulations to be introduced; but this is precisely that happened. First came the General Service Enlistment Act in 1856, decreeing that all recruits must swear that they would be willing to cross the sea if so required. Then followed the issue of the Enfield Rifle in January 1857. The cartridges for this rifle were greased with tallow containing cow and pig fat[7] and had to be bitten to pour out the powder. Asking the sepoys to use such ammunition was an act of amazing folly because it was universally known that the cow is sacred to the Hindu and the pig impure to the Muslim. The mistake was hastily rectified. But it was too late. The sepoys were convinced that yet another blatant attempt was being made to deprive them of their religion so that they would have no option but to turn Christian.

On 26 February the 19th Native Infantry at Berhampur refused to take delivery of their percussion caps and on 29 March a sepoy of the 34th Native Infantry at Barrackpore openly mutinied. He was executed. Buth regiments were disbanded. Soon the entire Bengal Army was in a state of turmoil.

But it was the mutiny of the sepoys at Meerut, 40 miles from Delhi, which developed into the Great Rebellion. On 24 April 85 sepoys of the Third Cavalry refused to touch the cartridges. They were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment by a court martial. On 9 May they were brought to the parade ground and subjected to the disgrace of being publicly fettered like ordinary felons. This prove to be the straw that broke the camel's back. On the following day, which happened to be a Sunday, the comrades of the imprisoned sepoys rose in revolt, released their friends as well as all the other prisoners from the jail and jointly with the roughs of the town killed all the Europeans they could find,

including women and children. Then they marched to Delhi, arriving on the morning of 11 May (1857).

The Rebellion in Delhi

At Delhi they met practically no resistance. By a stipulation with the Moghul emperor, no European troops could be stationed there and the Indian regiments readily joined their comrades from Meerut. Europeans and Anglo-Indian men, women and children that could be found were slaughtered; many escaped and some were given shelter in private homes. About 50 persons, chiefly women and children of European and mixed European descent, were brought to the palace and confined there in a small room (at the trial of Bahadur Shah the number of persons who were actually murdered on 16 May was given as 49). The magazine, the largest in India, was heroically blown up by the British officers themselves to prevent it from falling into the hands of the mutineers --

> The palace fortress rested on the eastern wall of the city, which runs along the bank of the river Jumna, and is protected on the other side by lofty red granite walls embattled and machicolated with small round towers, and two noble gateways, each defended by an outer barbican of the same construction though of less height. Outside the palace on the river side stands a strong fortification called Salimgarh, which was connected with the palace by a small bridge which spanned the wide moat which surrounds it. The main entrance to this outwork was a gateway close to the old bridge of boats...it was through Salimgarh that a few of the foremost mutineers from Meerut obtained an entrance into the palace, and reaching the front of the gilded domes over the king's special chamber loudly demanded that he should place himself at their head in the fight for the faith... On hearing the uproar of the troopers he sent an

attendant to ascertain who were creating a disturbance. The servant returned and informed his royal master that they were troopers from Meerut who had resolved on fighting for the faith and killing the white men. The king immediately despatched a message to Captain Douglas, the commandant of the palace guards, who on hearing the news, hastened to the king's apartments. In the Hall of Audience he met the aged monarch, who asked him if he knew how these men had obtained entrance to the palace. Douglas said he would descend to the courtyard, and speak to the troopers. But the king laid hold of his hand, and said: 'I won't let you go; they are murderers; they might kill you also'. The king's physician added his entreaties to those of is master, and suggested that Douglas might speak to the men from the balcony overhanging the courtyard. Douglas stepped forward, and saw thirty or forty of the troopers standing below. He ordered them to depart, as their standing opposite to the monarch's private apartments was an act of disrespect to the king. They dispersed gradually, but, as they spread over the palace, they roused the inmates with their religious cry, *Deen, Deen!*[8]

Ghulam Abbas, who accompanied Douglas to the balcony, deposed afterwards that when the troops had dispersed the king said, 'Have the gates of the palace as well as those of the city closed immediately, lest these men should get in'.[9]

Another British chronicler who kept a journal during the rebellion also states that Bahadur Shah's initial reaction to the sudden appearance of the Meerut sepoys 'under the windows of the private female apartments' was one of 'surprise and indignation'[10] and he dispatched messengers on camels along the Meerut road 'to give immediate intimation of the advance of any European force. About the middle of the day they

returned to the palace, and reported that not a soldier was within twenty miles'.[11]

> Thus was Delhi lost; though one thing is beyond doubt, that had even a few squadrons of the carabiniers dashed into the city and hour or two after the mutineers from Meerut, or had four hundred of the rifles filed over the bridge about noon, myriads of graves might have now been empty. Even the King of Delhi could not believe that there was no pursuit[12] [by the British force from Meerut].

Muin-ud-din Hasan Khan, who was an Inspector of Police in Delhi at the outbreak of the rebellion, has given the following account of his audience with the king on 11 May:

> I was summoned, and prostrating myself, replied to his questions that my object in seeking an audience was, that plunder and butchery were going on; and all the bad characters were searching for European and Christian women and children to destroy them. I begged the king to stop this, and to arrange for the restoration of order. The King replied: 'I am helpless; all my attendants have lost their heads or fled. I remain here alone. I have no force to obey my order: what can I do?[13]

Another incident on the same day is narrated by Jiwan Lal, who was present in Delhi during the rebellion and recorded each day's events as they happened. He states that two rebel subedars in the course of an audience with the king

> ...formally tendered the services of the troops of the king. They were directed to take their orders from Hakim Ahsanullah Khan. They sought him out and gave their message. It is said that Ahsanullah looked much perplexed what reply to give. He looked upon the outbreak as a passing thunder-cloud, too black to

last long. His reply was: 'You have been long accustomed under the English rule to regular pay. The King has no treasury. How can he pay you'? The officers replied: 'We will bring the revenue of the whole Empire to your treasury'. Hakim Ahsanullah then called for a return of the troops who had mutinied. The officer-in-charge of the King's palace was sent for. News of the death of some of the officers next reached the Palace, followed by the arrival of a regiment of cavalry, who took up a position in the courtyard of the *Dewan-i-Khas.* Many of the men forcibly intruded into the presence of the king, who was seated in the *Dewan-i-Khas.*[14]

It is clear from the above accounts that, far from welcoming the rebels from Meerut and eagerly assuming their leadership, Bahadur Shah's first reaction was one of surprise, indignation and bewilderment. His thoughts turned to the British who were his protectors and he was disappointed that the British forces from Meerut had not pursued the mutineers and come to his rescue. The days happenings only increased his anxiety and on that very evening (11 May) his physician and confidant sent an urgent message on his behalf to the Lieutenant-Governor of Agra 'informing him of the arrival of the troops, after they had murdered their European officers, and representing the king's inability to take any measures against them, and begging for help in the shape of European troops'.[15] The letter ended with the following plaintive verse:

Bar lab rasidah janam,

tu baya kih zindah ma nam

Pas az ankih man nah manam

bachih kar khvali amad[16]

[I have reached the last breath of my life, you must come so that I may survive

If I no longer survive

what use will be your coming]

Meanwhile the mutineers were becoming increasingly arrogant and threatening and conditions in the city were becoming chaotic. Jiwan Lal noted down the happening of 12 May in these terms:

> On this morning (12th) the whole body of native officers of the regiments that had arrived yesterday, concerted together and demanded an audience of the King. It was granted; the native officers presented nazars (tribute money) and described themselves as faithful soldiers awaiting his orders. Hakim Ahsanullah Khan secretly warned the King that no dependence could be placed no them, and expressed the fear that as soon as a sufficient number had been gathered together there would be a general plunder of the city. Later in the day Hakim Ahsanullah took counsel with some of the leading men of the city.... The council broke up without any definite decision, beyond arranging for supplies of food for the soldiers to prevent their plundering. This work was entrusted to Mahbub Ali Khan. Mohammad Mir Nawab, son of Tafazul Hossein, pleader of the Civil Court, was appointed Governor of the City. All trade in the city ceased entirely, for every shop that was opened was cleared of its contents. Nawab Hamud Ali Khan was this day accused of concealing Europeans, and their persons were demanded from him. The Nawab was then dragged to the Palace, and only released under orders from the King's Wazir; the soldiery only consenting to his release on the condition that his house should be thoroughly searched, and that he should be dealt with as they pleased, should a single European be found concealed there...All this afternoon the Palace was thronged by a turbulent mob of soldiers, calling out that all the grain-shops

were closed and the King's loyal servants were starving. The soldiers demanded of the King that he should pass through the city accompanied by his army, and personally allay the fears of the citizens and order the people to resume their ordinary occupations. The king yielded, and mounted on an elephant, passed in procession through the streets. He did personally order the shops to be reopened, and some were opened and again closed; but the shopkeepers generally were deaf to his orders. When the King returned to the Palace, he found the courtyard of the *Dewan-i-Khas* crowded with troopers and their horses. They assailed him with loud cries, complaining that the men of the regiment which had mutinied at Delhi had possessed themselves of the treasure from the Delhi collectorate, intending to keep it, and had refused to share it with the Meerut mutineers. The king, utterly distracted and bewildered in the conflicting counsels, ordered the Princes, who had been appointed to the command of the troops, to send every mutineer out of the city, locating regiments in separate places, and leaving only one regiment in the Palace for the defence of the city, and another on the sands in front of the Palace, between the fort and the river. The King pointed out to some of the Subahadars present that the *Dewan-i-Khas* had hitherto been an enclosure sacred to royalty alone, and had never before been forcibly entered by armed men...From house to house the unwilling King was distracted by cries and petitions - now from the servants of Europeans who had been murdered, now from the shopkeepers whose shops had been plundered, now from the higher classes whose houses had been broken into - all looked to the King for immediate redress. Appeals were made to him to repress the plunder and rapine now common throughout the city...Towards evening a number of his native regimental officers came and again

represented the difficulty they experienced in getting rations. Forgetful of the lofty tone of the morning's order, and of the high-toned phraseology expressive of the King's dignity, they addressed him with such disrespectful terms as, I say, you King! I say, you old fellow! ('Ari, Badshah! Ari, Buddha!') Listen', cried one, catching him by the hand 'Listen to me', said another, touching the old King's beard. Angered at their behaviour, yet unable to prevent their insolence, he found relief alone in bewailing before his servants his misfortunes and his fate. Again summoned by loud cries from outside the Palace gates, he passes a second time in procession through the city, calling on the shopkeepers to open their shops and resume trade. Throughout this eventful day he was distraught, perplexed, and cowed at finding himself in a position which made him the mere puppet of those who had formerly been only too glad humbly to obey his orders, but who now, taking advantage of the spirit of insubordination which was rife in all classes of the city in this day of ruin and riot, were not ashamed to mock and humiliate him.[17]

Queen Zinat Mahal told a visitor after the mutiny that the mutineers even robbed the palace and that her own jewels were saved only because they had been buried.[18]

One of the charges against Bahadur Shah at the trail was that, on 16 May 1857, he 'feloniously' caused and became 'accessory to the murder of' 49 persons, chiefly women and children of Europen and mixed European descent. To assess Bahadur Shah's role in this tragedy, it is necessary to note how these unfortunate persons happened to arrive at the palace in the first place.

Ahsanullah tells us that 'the mutineers took them in and about the city, and having established their

own quarters in the palace, they brought their prisoners in with them too'.[19] It is clear from this that the persons in question were for all practical purposes the prisoners of the sepoys who were in physical control of the palace and its inhabitants and not in that of the king who was only in nominal control.

The room in which all the prisoners had been confined was used as an office by the king's professor of Islamic law. It had only one door and no window. According to Mukandlal, Secretary to the King, on the day of the murder some mutineers accompanied by prince Moghul arrived at the King's private apartments. Moghul and Basant Ali Khan went into the king's room while the soldiers waited outside. They came out after about 20 minutes when Basant Ali Khan proclaimed that the king had given his permission for the slaughter. Thereupon the king's retainers in whose custody the prisoners had been took them away and together, with some mutineers killed them.

In this *memoirs* Ahsanullah gives the events leading up to the slaughter in some detail. He says that when the mutineers first sent word to the king through the eunuchs Basant Ali Khan and Sidi Nasir that the English prisoners must be killed, the king replied that there was no risk in keeping the women and children and that there was no advantage in killing them. Ahsanullah represented to the king that it was forbidden by Islamic law to kill children and women and further that it would be unwise to do so. The queen supported Ahsanullah. The mutineers alleged that the king's officials were in league with the English and pressed for permission to kill the prisoners, declaring that they would them in any case on the next day. They also cried out that they would kill Ahsanullah. The king then sent permission through Sidi Nasir.[20]

From the available evidence it would appear that the king and his advisers and the queen were definitely against the slaughter and tried to save time. The king assented to the foul deed under duress after the life and Ahsanullah had been threatened and there was a possibility that harm might be fall other persons close to him, including the queen, and after the mutineers had made clear that they would murder the prisoners irrespective of whether he gave them permission to do so or not. This conclusion accords with that of Malleson 'That the King of Delhi was not actively implicated in the atrocities committed in the palace, that a feeble old man, he was merely a passive instrument, not possessing the power to resist, in the hands of others, was shown conclusively at his trial'.[21]

The only persons who escaped alive were Mrs. Alexander Aldwell, her three children and a native Muslim woman who had been confined for giving food and water to some Christians. Mrs. Aldwell had pleaded that they were Muslims. She had learnt, and had also taught her children, how to recite the *kalima*.

An eye-witness, Jat Mall, deposed that the prisoners were slaughtered in the courtyard of the palace. Mirza Moghul was standing on the roof of his house overlooking the courtyard and some other sons and grandsons of the king were standing on their houses. 'They appeared to be spectators. It had been determined that the massacre was to take place, and there was no necessity for their urging the execution of it'.[22]

In a letter to prince Moghul, Bahadur Shah complained that the sepoys enter and plunder the houses of the inhabitants on the false plea that they have concealed Europeans...although repeated orders have been issued to the infantrymen occupying the royal farashkhana, and the regiment of the cavalry staying in

the garden to vocate these places, they have not yet done so. There are places which not not even Nadir Shah nör Ahmad Shah nor any of the British Governors General of India entered on horseback...there is no money in the royal treasury, and the city merchants having been plundered and ruined have no longer the ability to provide a loan...Wearied and helpless we have now resolved on making a vow to pass the remainder of our days in services acceptable to God, and relinquishing the title of sovereign fraught with cares and troubles, and in our present griefs and sorrows, assuming the garb of a religious mendicant, to proceed first and stay at the shrine of the saint Khwaja Sahib, and, after making necessary arrangements for the journey, to go eventually to Mecca'.[23] The letter ended with the request that prince Moghul should obtain an agreement from the commanders of the army to mend their ways.

The clamour of the troops for a regular salary became the greatest cause of friction between the citizens and the sepoys and caused much misery and disorder. There was no regular revenue and there was no option but to extort funds from bankers and merchants most of whom were Hindus and from the other well-to-do. Two orders of the king addressed to prince Moghul, the Commander-in-Chief will illustrate the point:

....*Dated 8th July 1857* -- A very small balance of cash remains in our treasury. That there is no immediate prospect of revenue from any quarter, and that the little money which remains must of necessity be very soon expended. You are directed to call together, during the day or tonight, all the the Officers of the Regiments which first arrived, in order that they may deliberate and decide on means to be adopted for raising funds to meet the daily necessary and emergent expenses. A meeting of this kind, in the language of the soldiery, is called a 'Court'. You are

to use stringent injunctions in this matter, and the result of the deliberations, in the shape of a feasible plan for replenishing the treasury, whatever it may be, you will cause to be embodied in a petition from the, which you will lay before the Royal presence tomorrow. It is a necessary measure of prudence and precaution, to make arrangements in this matter before the treasury is quite exhausted. Moreover, as no private treasury was ever kept by us, and as the contributions to the State loan have not been realized, all our servants, old and new are now in pecuniary difficulties. The money, amounting to a lakh and twenty thousand rupees, which was levied last month as loan at interest from the merchants of the city for our private expenses, was not all received accordingly. Under these circumstances, how are the expenses of others to be provided for?[24]

Dated 28th July 1857 -- No money whatever remains in the Treasury for paying the daily and monthly allowances of the troops, nor yet for defraying the daily urgent expenses of the Magazine, the Artillery and the manufacture of powder. Without powder the active operations against the infidels must be interrupted. It is necessary, therefore, quickly to devise some plan for raising funds through the means of a loan, without interest, from all the Punjabi and other merchants, and from the rich servants of the English, and forward it to the Royal Treasury.[25]

To organize the military effort, the king, on 18 May, appointed some of his sons and a grandson to command various units of the army. Prince Moghul was appointed Commander-in-Chief. The feebleness of the king and the incompetence of the inexperienced princes has been described in an Arabic tract entitled *The Story of the War of Independence 1857-58*[26] by Allamah Fazl-i-Haqq of Khairabad. He wrote the account in the Andaman Islands where he had been

transported for life by the British for signing a *fatwa* for *jihad* against them. He belonged to the elite of the Delhi society and was widely respected for his learning and eminence as a teacher. He was an eye-witness and his assessment is realistic:

...he [the Emperor] was very old and was in reality, governed by his wife and *wazir* [Ahsanullah Khan]. The said *wazir* was a high authority but in fact he was a friend of the Christians and had excessive love for them and was a bitter enemy of their opponents. The same was the case with some of the members of his (Emperor's) family; some of these were near to him and his throne and were in confidence. They did as they liked, and acted according to their own views, making at the same time a show of obedience to him. He was so completely devoid of experience that he knew nothing and did not do but strange things. He issued no orders according to his independent opinion and could not understand (what was) good and (what was) evil. He could not decide anything openly or in secret, and had no power of doing harmor good to any one.

This was the state of affairs when there arose a party of strong and brave Muslims for *jihad* and fighting after having asked for a *fatwa* from the pious *ulama* and their *(ulama's)* declaration that *jihad* had become obligatory in accordance with the *fatwas* of the authoritative *imams.*

In the meanwhile this inexperienced *Amir* appointed as officers of the army some of his sons and grandsons who were stupid, dishonest and coward. They hated honest and wise persons. They had never witnessed a battle nor had they any experience of the blows of swords and lances. They selected men from the gutter for their society and consultation. These inexperienced fellows drowned themselves in the

ocean of luxuries and extravagance and submerged themselves in the flood of debauchery. They were poverty-stricken and (suddenly) they became opulent; when they became opulent they took to a life of dissipation. They obtained enormous sums from the people under the pretext of securing provisions for the army but did not give anything to any one belonging to the army and ate themselves all that they got. The leading-most of the prostitutes made them negligent in the matter of leading the rebel forces and their association with mistresses kept them from marching in the night with the army. The abundance of luxuries and enjoyments rendered them neglectful and made them stay behind the vanguard; their cowardliness and mean anxieties, hidden in their hearts, made them withdraw from taking a firm position in the centre of the army; misfortune kept them away from the right wing, while gambling and luxury kept them from remaining in the right wing, and their vulgar companions prevented them from marching along with the rear guard. Such is always the case of a person who is given the charge of a great campaign inspite of his incapacity and on whom is placed a heavy burden despite his being devoid of strength. They passed their nights in sleeping and their days in intoxication. When they woke up and came to their senses they felt embarrassed and amazed.

On 8 June British force succeeded in occupying the Ridge overlooking Delhi. A contingent from the city had tried to intercept it but was repulsed at Badli; and the siege of Delhi began. The British force was not large enough to encircle the city and stop the mutineers from receiving reinforcements nor were the sorties by the besieged successful in preventing the British from receiving supplies and troops from the Punjab. But while the British suffered no defections, the mutineers

suffered desertions which increased in number as the siege continued. Nevertheless, the mutineers never lost their superiority in numbers over their opponents: At the very lowest estimate there were never fewer than double as many defenders assailants, and more generally four times as many'.[26] Moreover, the palace-fortress, the city walls and the river constituted a formidable defensive position. The chief calamity from which the British forces suffered was sickness, including cholera, caused by the extreme heat of the Indian summer.

The besieged were heartened by the arrival on 1 July of an Artillery Brigade from Bareilly under Muhammad Bakht Khan. He had served the British for forty years as a *subadar* in the artillery unit known as the Bareilly Brigade. The field-battery which he commanded had won many distinctions and decorations during the First Afghan War. At the outbreak of the rebellion at Bareilly in 1857, he marched to Delhi at the head of his artillery brigade. He claimed to be related to the royal house of Oudh as well as to the House of Timur. He was an intelligent and stout fighter but was also arrogant and ambitious and was handicapped by the disorderly conditions prevailing inside the city. During the siege of Delhi he had some sharp encounters with the British forces. It was at his instance that the leading *ulema* including Allamah Fazl-i-Haqq issued a *fatwa* declaring *jihad* against the British.

Upon arrival in Delhi Bakht Khan presented himself before the king along with his officers 'but contrary to etiquette he did not make his obeisance at the *Red Purdah*, nor did his companions, and though many people remonstrated with him he paid no attention. When he came near the King's Chair in the *Diwan-i-Khas,* he salaamed as though to an equal, and merely taking his sword from his side, presented it to the King. The King was chafed (?) at this want of

courtesy, but praised the bravery of his troops. The Risalahdar Muhammad Shafi and Maulvi Imdad Ali said, "Your Majesty should bestow a sword and buckler on Bakht Khan, for he deserves them, and such a favour is but proper for such a chief". At first the king excused himself, saying they are not ready, but being importuned called for them from the armoury, and bestowed them on Bakht Khan. But even then he offered no nazr to the king. He said, "I hear that you have given the Princes jurisdiction on the army. That is bad. Give the power to me, and I will make proper arrangements, what do these people know of the customs, etc., of the English army?" The King answered, "The princes were appointed at the request of the officers of the army". He was then dismissed'.[27]

Hoping that the discipline in the army would improve if Bakht Khan was appointed supreme commander, the king on 5 July was persuaded to designate Khan as Governor-General[28] (Sahib-i-Alam Bahadur). Prince Moghul retained the office of Commander-in-Chief.[29] These arrangements cause rivalry and tension between Bakht Khan and Mirza Moghul.[30]

A Court of Administration was set up for the proper administration of the civil and military affairs of the State. It consisted of ten members, six from the military and four from civil departments. All matters of Government were to be placed before the Court and decided by a majority. The decision was to be placed before the Sahib-i-Alam Bahadur and finally before the *Huzur-i-Wala* [the Emperor]. In case of a conflict of opinion between the Court and the Sahib-i-Alam Bahadur, the matter was to be placed before the Court for reconsideration. If the disagreement was not resolved, the proceedings were to before placed before the king whose orders would be final.[31]

On paper the Court looked an attractive concept but, like all constitutions, its success depended on the spirit in which it was worked and on the experience and competence of those who worked it. These requisites were obviously lacking and there is no reliable evidence to show that the Court achieved its high objectives to any significant extent. In the statement made by Bahadur Shah in his defence during his trial by the British he referred to the Court as follows:

> The mutinous soldiery had established a Court in which all matters were deliberated on, and such measures as, after deliberation, were sanctioned by this council, they adopted; but I never took any part in their conferences. Thus, without my knowledge or orders, they plundered, not only many individuals, but several entire streets, plundering, robbing, killing and imprisoning all they chose; and forcibly extorting whatever sums of money they thought fit from the merchants and other respectable residents of the city, and appropriating such exactions to their own private purposes. All that has been done, was done by that rebellious army. I was in their power, what could I do?[32]

The most notable administrative achievement in Delhi was the avoidance of communal trouble. And for this all credit it due to the king. When on 19 May, Maulvi Muhammad Sayyid set up the standard of *jihad* or holy war in the Jami Mashid, the king immediately ordered it to be removed. He declared that Hindus and Muslims were equal in his eyes. Again largely due to the personal efforts of the king, no cows, oxen or buffaloes were slaughtered during the celebration of *Id-ul-Zuha*.[33]

Meanwhile, the British forces on the Ridge were growing stronger as time passed. On 7 August Brigadier Nicholson arrived at the Ridge followed a week later by Nicholson's Column and a large convey with guns,

ammunition and treasure. A siege train from Ferozepur arrived on 4 September after an enemy force which had marched out of the city to waylay it had been defeated at Najafgarh on 25 August. Further reinforcements reached the British camp on 6 September followed two days later by troops from Kashmir. Preparations for an assault on the city were now taken in hand and the attack was launched on 14 September one hour after daybreak.

At the same time morale inside the city had been deteriorating with the passage of time. The sorties to dislodged the besiegers and intercept reinforcements had failed. The king's inner circle, specially Ahsanullah, Mahbub Ali and Queen Zinat Mahal were suspected of being pro-British. In a letter written from 'Camp Delhi' on 19 August 1857, H.H. Greathed, who had been appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor of Agra as his political agent attached to the field force, wrote: 'I am beginning to get letters from the princes, declaring that they have been all along fondly attached to us, and that they only want to know what they and do for us. They must find out for themselves for I shall not answer and tell them'.[34] In another letter dated 25 August he wrote:

> ....'An emissary came out from Zinat Mahal, the favourite wife of the King, a great political personage, offering to exercise her influence with the King, to bring about some arrangement. I sent word, we wished her personally all happiness, and had no quarrel with women and children, but could hold no communications with anyone belonging to the palace.'[35]

Two eye-witnesses of the scene, a Muslim and a Hindu, both us that toward the end of the siege Hindu-Muslim co-operation inside the city had markedly deteriorated. Fazl-i-Haqq of Khairabad wrote, 'the entire Hindu population was with them'. Again, 'the money-

changers and other Hindus...were in alliance with the Christians' and the 'late servants of the King were enemies of the fighters (*Mujahidin*)'.[36] Jiwan Lal recorded in his journal under the date 14 September: About midday the Mohammedans ceased to oppose the English. They, together with the sepoys, began to take refuge in the houses of the Hindus, whom they upbraided for not co-operating with them. The whole day, they were pouring abuse upon the Hindus, threatened to massacre both them and their families, when they should have defeated the English.[37]

Many mutineers were reported to be going off to their homes, weary of a struggle they seemed to be losing. But there always was a strong element of *mujahidin* who were determined to fight the infidel Christians to the death.

Major-General Wilson, the Officer commanding the British forces at Delhi, had entrusted the conduct of the actual assault on the city on 14 September to Brigadier-General Nicholson. The troops were divided into five columns of which Nicholson led the first. While cheering the troops on he was shot through the body, the ball entering his side and coming out under the left armpit.[38]

The part of Delhi where the assault was made contained a large stock of wine and spirits which the members of the invading force 'might drink to satiety, simply for the trouble of putting forth the hand and taking it...With all my love for the army, I must confess, the conduct of the professed Christians on this occasion was one of the most humiliating facts connected with the siege. How the enemy must have gloried at that moment in our shame'.[39] Captain Hodson wrote, 'We are making slow progress in the city. The fact is, the troops are utterly demoralized by hard work and hard drink, I grieve to say. For the first time in my life, I

have had to see English soldiers refuse repeatedly to follow their officers'.[40]

At one stage General Wilson talked of withdrawing from the walls of Delhi to the camp until he should be reinforced. However, he providentially accepted the advice of men whose hopes of eventual success were stronger. The army was restored to a sense of duty, and the recurrence of 'similar evils' was prevented 'by the destruction of all the wine and beer found in the merchant's godowns of the city of Delhi'.[41]

On 20 September the British gained possession of the city, including the palace-fortress. General Wilson set up his headquarters in the *Diwan-i-Khas* (hall of special audience), the beautiful marble *durbar* hall of the palace where once stood the peacock throne, and proposed the health of Queen Victoria.

References

1. C.H. Philips, *The East India Company*, Manchester, 1940, p.191. William Wilberforce (1759-1833) is famous for his efforts to abolish slave trade and the practice of slavery.

2. The happenings in Delhi are specially relevant to the subject of this book and we will describe them in some detail after broadly sketching the background against which the drama at Delhi was played.

3. 'Delhi could not have been taken without Sikhs and Gurkhas; Lucknow could not have been defended without the Hindustani soldiers who so nobly responded to Sir Henry Lawrence's call; and nothing that Sir John Lawrence might have done could have prevented our losing, for a time, the whole of the country north of Calcutta, had not the men of the Punjab and the Derajat [tracts beyond the Indus] remained true to our cause'. Lord Roberts of Kandahar, *Forty-one Years in India*, London 1897, Vol. I, p. viii.

   'The brave and turbulent population of Oudh with a few exceptions treated the fugitives of the ruling race with a marked kindness'. G.W. Forrest, *A History of the Indian Mutiny*, Edinburgh and London, MCIV, Vol. 1, p.xv.

4. G.W. Forrest, *A History of the Indus Mutiny.* Edinburgh and London, MCMXII, Vol. III, p. vii.

5. J.W. Kaye, *A History of their Sepoy War in India.* London, 1876, Vol. III, p. 566.

6. Lord Roberts of Kandahar, *Forty-one Years in India*, London 1897, Vol. I, p. 82.

7. 'The recent researches of Mr. Forrest in the records of the Government of India prove that the lubricating mixture used in preparing the cartridges was actually composed of the objectionable ingredients, cows' fat and lard, and that incredible disregard of the soldiers' religious prejudices was displayed in the manufacture of these cartridges'. Lord Roberts of Kandahar, *Fourty-one Years in India.* London 1897, Vol. I, p. 431.

8. G.W. Forrest, *A History of the Indian Mutiny.* Edinburgh and London, MCMIV, Vol. I, pp. 39-41.

9. *Proceedings on the trial of Bahadur Shah*, Calcutta, Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing Calcutta, 1895, p. 18. This publication henceforth shall be referred to as *Proceedings.*

10. J. Cave-Brown, *The Punjab and Delhi in 1857.* Edinburgh and London, MDCCCLXI, Vol. I, p. 64. The author of this book was Chaplain of the Punjab Movable Column in 1857.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

12. *History of the Siege of Delhi. by an officer who served there*, Edinburgh, 1861, p. 39.

13. Charles Theophilus Metcalfe, *Two Native Narratives of the Mutiny in Delhi.* Westminster, 1898, p. 49.

14. *Ibid.*.p. 83. Jiwan Lal had been the accountant of pensions paid by the British Government to the king's family and for many years lived in daily contact with the royal family.

15. *Proceedings*, 164A. The Lieutenant-Governor sent the following telegram to the Governor-General on 14 May 1857: 'We have authentic intelligence in a letter from the King that the town and Fort of Delhi and his own person are in the hands of the insurgent regiments of the palace, which joined about 100 troops from Meerut and opened the gates'. *Parliamentary Papers* Vol. XXX 1857, *Mutinies in the East Indies. Session 2: 30 April-28 August 1857*, London 1857, p. 178.

16. Shams-al-Ulama Muhammad Zakaullah, *History of the Rise of the British Empire in India.* Delhi 1904, p. 660.

17. Metcalfe, *Two Native Narratives of the Mutiny in Delhi*, pp. 84-87.

18. R. Montgomery Martin, *The Indian Empire*. London n.b. Vol. II, p. 454.

19. *Proceedings*. p. 95

20. *Memoirs*, pp. 9-11

21. G.B. Malleson, *History of the Indian Mutiny*. London 1879, Vol. II, vid.

22. *Proceedings*. pp. 78, 80.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 134-35.

24. *Ibid.*. pp. 40-41.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

26. The English translation of the tract was published in the 'Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society' in Part I of its January 1957 issue under the editorship of Dr. S. Moinul Haq. The extract which follows in taken from pp.30-32.

27. *Parliamentary Papers. Mutinies in the East Indies*, Vol. XVY, 1858 W. 3240, p.224.

28. *Hakim Ahsanullah Khan's Memories*, p. 18.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

30. *Proceedings*. p. 133. An order issued by Mirza Moghul on 13 September still describes him as Commander-in-Chief.

31. *Ibid.*. p. 58. Prince Moghul complained to the king on 17 July that Bakht Khan had countermanded his orders.

32. S.K. Benerji 'Bahadur Shah II of Delhi and the Administration Court of the Mutineers', Indian Historical Records Commission, Proceedings of Meetings, Vol. XXIV; *Rebellion 1857. A Symposium*. Ed. P.C. Joshi, New Delhi,1857, pp. 33-41.

33. *Proceedings*, p. 139.

34. Percival Spear, *Twilight of the Moghuls*, pp. 207-208.

35. H.H Greathed, *Letters written from the Siege of Delhi*, London, 1858, pp. 205-06.

36. *Ibid.*. p. 217.

37. Allamah Fazl-i-Haqq, Khairabad, *The Story of the War of Independence. 1857-58*. Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society, Part I, January 1857, pp. 33, 36.

38. Charles Theophilus Metcalfe, *Two Native Narratives of the Mutiny in Delhi*. Westminster, 1898, pp. 230-31.

39. Nicholson died on 23 September 1857.

40. J.E.W. Rotton, *The Chaplain's Narrative of the Siege of Delhi*. London 1858, p. 303.

41. W.S.R. Hodson, *Twelve years of a Soldier's Life in India*. London 1859, p. 296. This book is a collection of extracts from Hodson's letters. At the time of the British assault in Delhi, Hodson was incharge of the Intelligence Department under the orders of the Quartermaster-General and also Commander of his own newly raised regiment of Irregular Horse. He was promoted to the rank of Captain on 14 September 1857 on the death of major Jacob.

42. J.E.W. Rotton, *op. cit.*, pp. 303-04.

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4

Surrender and Trial of Bahadur Shah

On the night of 19 September 1857 it became evident that the capture of the palace-fortress by the British was imminent. The indomitable Bakht Khan decided to leave Delhi with all the sepoys who were still loyal to him and carry on the fight in the open country. He pleaded hard with the king to accompany him. The old king had never had the vigour or the resolution to fight the British and had been a mere tool in the hands of others. To leave Delhi and resort to guerrilla warfare was beyond his capacity. Failing to get an immediate reply, Bakht Khan departed after obtaining a promise from the king that he would meet him on the following day at the tomb of Humayun.

At this stage Ilahi Baksh[1] took a hand in the game. A daughter of his had been married to the late heir apparent, Fakhr-ud-din, and he wielded considerable influence in the palace. He persuaded Bahadur Shah to accompany him to his house for the night and there pointed out the hardships which would entail accompanying Bakht Khan and argued that the effort would end in certain defeat. His task was facilitated by the fact that queen Zinat Mahal was in favour of coming to terms with the British. When Bakht Khan met the

king at Humayun's tomb on the next day, the latter declined to join him.

Ilahi Baksh now contacted the one-eyed Rajab Ali, who enjoyed the confidence of the British authorities, having served them loyally in the Punjab in various capacities for many years past[2]. Rajab Ali in turn communicated the whereabouts of the king to Hodson who at once rode down to the headquarters of General Wilson (20 September)[3].

Wilson said he could not spare a single European for capturing the king but in the end reluctantly 'gave orders to Captain Hodson to promise the king's life and freedom from personal indignity, and make what other terms he could'.[4] Hodson then started for Humayun's tomb with 50 of his own Punjabi irregulars. When he arrived at the spot, he stationed his men near an old gateway and sent in Rajab Ali and another 'native envoy' to the king. After two hours negotiation Rajab Ali announced the success of his mission. It was agreed that the lives of the king, of Zinat Mahal, of her son Jawan Bakht and that of her father would be spared. A covered palanquin containing the queen first came out and then another containing the king. Hodson dismounted and demanded him to deliver up his arms. The king asked if it was Hodson Bahadur and would he repeat the promise from General Wilson that his life would be spared. Hodson did so added that 'he would kill him like a dog' if any attempt was made to rescue him. 'The trembling old creature put the sword he had with him into the powerful hand of Hodson'; the son did the same. Hodson took his prisoners to the palace and delivered them to the civil authorities. When he reported the success of his mission to Wilson the General's reaction was 'not so warm as the nature of it seemed to have merited'. Well, I am glad you have got him', said the general 'but I never expected to see either you or him again'. At the recommendation of the officers

present, Hodson was allowed to keep the swords taken with the king, one of which had belonged to Jahangir and the other to Nadir Shah.[5]

Hodson's brother, who published extracts from Hodson's letters under the title *'Twelve Years of a Soldier's Life in India'*, wrote in the preface that though Captain Hodson served 'in India, he remembered he was an Englishman; though living amongst the heathen, he did not forget that he was a Christian'. However, in fact Hodson seems to have possessed no spark of the Christian virtues of forgiveness and mercy. On his own admission he would have felt far happier if he had been able to murder the king whom he himself described as 'very old and infirm' and one who 'had long been a mere tool' in the hands of the princes.[6]

His threat to kill the king like a dog if an attempt was made to rescue him was definitely contrary to the spirit of General Wilson's orders that the king's life was to be spared. In a letter to his brother he wrote, 'I am anxious now that you should fully understand that your brother was bound by orders from the General to spare the King's life, much against his own will'.[7] Again, 'The orders I received were such that I did not dare to act on the dictates on my judgment to the extent of killing him when he had given himself up'.[8] Another reason why he did not kill the king was that 'there was no other way of catching him open to me...Had he got away then the whole country would have flocked to his standard'.[9]

Slaughter of the Princes

However, Hodson was able partly to satisfy his ambition for exterminating the House of Timur on the day following the king's surrender. 'I then set to work to get hold of the villain princes' he tells us. 'The General at length yielded a reluctant consent, adding "but don't let me be bothered with them". I assured him that it was nothing but his own order which "bothered" him with

the King, as I would much rather have brought him into Delhi dead than alive'.[10]

Several members of the royal family and thousands of mutineers and citizens of Delhi had escaped from the city but two of the king's sons and a grandson 'fancying I suppose, as we had spared the king, we would spare them' had taken shelter in Humayun's tomb. They were the Mirzas Moghul, Khizr Sultan and Abu Bakr. With them we about 3,000 Muslim followers and in the suburb close by there were about 3,000 more, all armed. Hodson and his second in command MacDowell rode to Humayun's tomb with 100 men. Negotiations for surrender were carried on by 'one of the inferior scions of the royal family' and by one eyed Moulvi Rujub Alee'. After two hours the princes sent a messenger to say they were coming. Ten men were sent to meet them. Soon they appeared in a small *ruth* (a cart drawn by bullocks), five troopers on each side, and asked if their live had been promised. Hodson replied 'most certainly not' and sent them away towards the city with a guard of 10 men.

Hodson and MacDowell stayed back and successfully disarmed the mob and collected their arms. This took them two hours after which they caught up with the princes about five miles from where they had been taken and 'close to Delhi'. 'What shall we do with them?' Hodson asked MacDowell, 'I think we had better shoot them here, we shall never get them in'. Hodson ordered the princes to strip and get back into the cart and siezing a carbine from one of his men 'deliberately shot them one after another'. He had required them to strip 'to render their death and subsequent exposure... more impressive and terrible'. He ordered the bodies to be taken to the city and thrown out at the spot where the 49 European and persons of mixed blood had been murdered by the mutineers.[11]

According to MacDowell, the princes were shot because 'The increasing crowd pressed on the horses of sowars, and assumed every moment a more hostile appearance'. But the suggestion that the crowd were about to rescue the princes is manifestly false. On the previous day the king had surrendered to only 50 troops and no attempt had been made to free him. The crowd numbering thousands 'seemed perfectly paralyzed at the fact of one white man (for they thought nothing of his fifty black sowars) carrying of their king alone'. At the surrender of the princes, Hodson was backed up by a double that number.

Moreover, Hodson and MacDowell make it clear that thought the crowd was large it was in no mood to resist Hodson. At the time of the capture of the princes 'I [Hodson] demanded in a voice of authority the instant surrender of their arms etc. They immediately obeyed with an alacrity I scarcely dared to hope for'. And if no attempt at rescue had been made for two hours while the princes were being escorted by only 10 troopers, one was not likely to me made after Hodson and MacDowell had caught up with the captives with their complement of troopers close to Delhi.

Hodson also gave himself away by subsequently rejoicing at having murdered the princes. In a letter dated 22 September 1857 he wrote that on the previous day he had been fortunate enough to capture the king and his favourite wife but 'Today more fortunate still, I have seized and destroyed the King's two sons and a grandson'.[12] Two days later he wrote, 'in twenty-four hours, therefore, I disposed of the principal members of the House of Timur the Tartar. I am not cruel, but I confess I did rejoice at the opportunity of ridding the earth of these wretches'.[13]

He thought he and his party had a right to all they found on the king and the princes but the General

thought otherwise and allowed him to keep only the two swords.[14] He intended to present Jahangir's sword to the Queen of England for which he thought she 'ought to give me her own cross'.[15] In fact 'between ourselves I ought to have anything they can give me'.[16]

He did not risk losing the ornaments he had snatched from the princes by declaring them to the General. In a letter to his wife dated 26 September he informed her that he was sending her 'a real trophy from Delhi, no less than the turquoise armlet and signet rings of the rascally princes whom I shot'.[17]

Hodson's shooting of the unarmed and unresisting princes was a horrible murder. But the British at time were so maddened by the passion for revenge that Hodson's heinous murder of the princes appeared meritorious to them and he was the recipient of many congratulations. A message from Montgomery who was later Chief Commissioner of Oudh ran: 'All honours to you (and to your "Horse") for catching the King and slaying his sons. I hope you will bag many more'.[18]

Humiliation of the Emperor

After taking Delhi 'The leading Europeans occupied the different portions of the palace, and their wives soon flocked to Delhi to join them. The royal apartments, the royal wardrobe, even to articles of daily use, were appropriated by the conquerors; while the king, queen and prince were thrust into the upper part of a half ruined gateway with a British sentinel at the door, prepared to defeat any attempt at rescue which this treatment might provoke, by shooting the aged captive'.[19] On Sunday morning the Church of England service was performed in the *Diwan-i-Khas*.[20]

The king had surrendered under the assurances that his life would be spared and he would not be

subjected to personal indignity but the latter promise was immediately broken. A letter from Delhi described his plight:

> It is not true that the King is living in State, but, on the contrary, he is confined to a little room containing only one *charpoy* (or cot), and allowed but two annas (3d.) a day for his food. He is treated with great disrespect by the officers and soldiers, though Mr. Saunders is civil to him. The officers boast that they make the king stand up and *saluam* to them, and one of them pulled his beard.[21]
>
> The begum and princesses of his house had come to share his prison with him. These unfortunate ladies, to whom no guilt could be attached, were exposed to the gaze of officers and soldiers, who could go into the room where they were at pleasure. To a native woman of the very lowest class this is an unutterable shame. My informant, a private soldier, who went to see the king, noticed their gilt slippers at the door, which surely ought to have been sufficient to prevent anyone, who wished to refrain from insulting helpless women, from entering. On his suddenly going in, they all turned their faces to the wall.[22]

Of course the sight of the incarcerated Moghul emperor became an irresistible curiosity for all tourists. Among those who recorded their impressions was Mrs. R. M. Coopland, widow of the Chaplain of the East India Company:

> We then came to at large, ruined, and broken-up garden, where we were joined by Mr. Omanney, a young civilian, who had charge of the king. We climbed some steep steps on to the terrace, where some guards were walking before the door, and entered a dirty-looking house, then the abode of the "king of kings", the descendant of a long line of

Moghuls, including Shah Jehan, Aurangzeb, and Timour. Pushing aside the *purdah*, we entered a small dirty, low room with white-washed walls, and there, on a low *charpoy*, cowered a thin small old man, dressed in a dirty white suit of cotton, and rolled in shabby wraps and rezais, on account of the cold. At our entrance he laid aside the *hookah* he had been smoking, and he, who had formerly thought it an insult for anyone to sit in his presence, began salaaming to us in the most object manner, and saying he was "burra kooshee" (very glad) to see us... His face was pale and wan, and his eyes weak and uncertain, seeming to shun our scrutiny; but an aristocratic expression of face reminded us of his noble descent...We raised the "chick" which separated the queen's room from the king's, and entered a very small bare, shabby room. Seated on a *charpoy* we beheld a large bold-looking woman, with not the least sign of royalty or dignity about her. She seemed about forty; her complexion was tawny, and her face large and coarsely featured, with daring black eyes and wide mouth, and dark hair partially concealed under her white cotton chudda. She wore a cotton dress of blackprint and but few ornaments; her small and well-shaped hands and feet were bare. Judging from her looks, she seemed capable of inciting the king on the deeds of blood, which she was accused of having done. She began asking Mrs. Garstone and the other lady about their husbands, and why Mrs. Garston had not brought her children, as she wished to see them; then, looking at my black dress, she sneeringly asked me what had become of my "sahib". I was so angry at he look and tone heartless contempt, that I said "Chupero" (silence), and walked out of her presence.[23]

Richard Temple went to see the king in order to prepare the evidence for his trial which was then

impending: 'It was a strange sight to see the aged man seated in a darkened chamber of his palace. The finely chiselled features, arched eyebrow, aquiline profile, sickly pallor of the olive complexion, nervous twitching of the face, delicate fingers counting beads, muttering speech, incoherent language, irritable self-consciousness, demeanour indicating febrile excitability - altogether made up a curious picture, upon which no spectator could look unmoved who was acquainted with Asiatic history. Here sat the last of the Great Moghuls, the descendant of emperors two centuries ago ruling the second largest population in the world, who had himself, though a phantom sovereign, been treated with regal honours. He was now about to be tried for his life by judges whose forefathers had sued for favour and protection from his imperial ancestor'.[24]

W.H. Russell, correspondent of the *London Times*, also wrote a graphic account of his call on the fallen emperor in June 1858:

> In a dingy, dark passage, leading from the open court or terrace in which we stood to a darker room beyond, there sat, crouched on his haunches, a diminutive, attenuated old man, dressed in an ordinary and rather dirty muslin tunic, his small lean feet bare, his head covered by a small thin cambric skull-cap. The moment of our visit was not propitious...In fact, the ex-King was sick; with bent body he seemed nearly prostrate over a brass basin, into which he was retching violently... The qualms of the King at last abated... He was still gasping for breath, and replied by a wave of the hand and a monosyllable to the Commissioner. That dim-wandering-eyed, dreamy old man, with feeble hanging nether lip and toothless gums, -- was he, indeed, one who had conceived that vast plan of restoring a great empire, who had fomented the most gigantic mutiny in the history of the world, and who

from the walls of his ancient palace, had hurled defiance and shot ridicule upon the race that held every throne in India in the hollow of their palms?... Who could look on him without pity? Yes, for one instant 'pity', till the rush of blood in that pitiless courtyard swept it from the heart! The passage in which he sat contained nothing that I could see but a *charpoy* such as those used by the poorest Indians. The old man cowered on the floor on his crossed legs, with his back against a mat which was suspended from doorway to doorway, so as to form a passage about twelve feet wide by twenty-four in length. Inside the mat we heard whispering, and some curious eyes that glinted through the mat at the strangers informed us that the king was not quite alone... His hands and feet were delicate and fine; his garments, scanty and foul. And this is the descendant of him who 'on the 12th of August, 1765, conferred on the East India Company the Dewanee (or Lordship) of the Provinces of Bengal, of Behar, and Orissa, and confirmed divers other possessions held by the Hon. Company under inferior grants from the Soobadhars of Bengal, the Deccan, and Carnatic!'[25]

Trial of Bahadur Shah

Wilson's promise that Bahadur Shah's life would be spared if he surrendered peacefully not only saved the last Moghul from being murdered by the trigger-happy Hodson but it also barred the military commission which tried him from passing the death sentence despite finding him guilty of treason. In making the promise Wilson had acted without the sanction of the Central Government; indeed, unknowingly, contrary to their wishes. It was lucky for Bahadur Shah that in the turmoil of the rebellion the directions of the head office did not reach the General.

An official report explains: 'It appears that on 20th of June 1857, the Commissioner of Benares was directed by your Government to forward to the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces a telegraphic message interdicting His Honour from making any promises to the King of Delhi or to the members of the Royal Family. It is presumed that a copy of this message was sent to Mr. Greathed then British Commissioner at Delhi but no acknowledgement of its receipt was made and no indication of its ever having been received was found among the records of his office at the time of his lamented decease in September'.[26]

In a letter to Saunders, who was Commissioner at Delhi at the time of Bahadur Shah's surrender, Wilson explained that he had guaranteed the Moghul emperor's life because 'I considered then the king had been only a tool in the hands of the Mutineers and that it was a wise political measure to secure his person and prevent his being carried off by the rebels'.[27]

A European military commission consisting of a president and four members assembled at Delhi on 27 January 1858 for the trial of Bahadur Shah in the *Diwan-i-Khas* of the palace. He was described as the 'ex-King of Delhi' and the charges preferred against him were:

1st - For that he, being a pensioner of the British Government in India at Delhi at various times between the 10th of May and 1st October 1857, encourage, aid and abet, Muhammad Bakht Khan, Subadar of the Regiment of Artillery, and divers others, Native Commissioned Officers and Soldiers unknown, of the East India Company's Army, in the crimes of Mutiny and Rebellion against the State.

2nd - For having at Delhi, at various times between the 10th of May and 1st October 1857, encouraged, aided and abetted Mirza Moghal, his own

son, a subject of the British Government in India, and others unknown, inhabitants of Delhi, and of the North-West Provinces of India, also subjects of the said British Government, to rebel and wage war against the State.

3rd - For that he, being a subject of the British Government in India, and not regarding the duty of his allegiance, did, at Delhi on the 11th May 1857, or thereabouts, as a false traitor against the State, proclaim and declare himself the reigning King and Sovereign of India, and did then and there traitorously seize and take unlawful possession of the City of Delhi, and did moreover, at various times between the 10th of May and 1st October 1857, as such false traitor aforesaid, treasonably conspire, consult, and agree with Mirza Moghal, his own son, and with Muhammad Bakht Khan, Subadar of the Regiment of Artillery, and divers other false traitors unknown, to raise, levy, and make insurrection, rebellion, and war, against the State, and further to fulfil and perfect this treasonable design of overthrowing and destroying the British Government in India, did assemble armed forces at Delhi, and send them forth to fight and wage war against the said British Government.

4th - For that he, at Delhi, on the 16th of May 1857, or thereabouts, did, within the precincts of the Palace at Delhi, feloniously cause, and become accessory to the murder of 49 persons, chiefly women and children of European and mixed European descent; and did moreover, between the 10th of May and 1st of October 1857, encourage and abet divers soldiers and others in murdering European officers, and other English subject, including women and children, both by giving and promising such murderers service, advancement, and distinction; and further, that he issued orders to different Native

Rulers having local authority in India, to slay and murder Christians and English people, whenever and wherever found on their territories; the whole or any part of such conduct being an heinous offence under Act XVI of 1857, of the Legislative Council in India.

Bahadur Shah pleaded not guilty. The judge advocate proceeded to explain that evidence would be produced which might not bear strictly to the charges; all the circumstances connected with the rebellion might be recorded. Also, that the scope of the investigation would not be confined by the observance of technicalities which belong to a regular trial. It was made clear further that the life of the king had been guaranteed by Captain Hodson, acting under instructions from Major-General Wilson.

The trial ended on 9 March after 21 hearings. Bahadur Shah was assisted by a lawyer named Ghulam Abbas. Several witnesses for the prosecution were produced and also a mass of documents including orders purporting to be from the king. The general impression made on the mind of the reader is that Bahadur Shah was surprised and alarmed at the sight of the Meerut mutineers and ordered the palace gates closed against them; that he expected to be rescued from them by the British but was soon disappointed; that the mutineers arrogantly made it evident that they were the masters of the situation and he was their instruments; and that his behaviour was not that of a confident warrior urging his troops on but that of a helpless old men lamenting their disorderly behaviour and expressing the wish to escape from the wretched scene and find solace in Mecca. At one time he even threatened to kill himself by swallowing a diamond.[29] It also became evident that the 82 years old prisoner possessed neither a healthy body nor a healthy mind.

The commencement of the trial had to be postponed from time to time because of his indisposition On the first day he appeared very infirm and tottered into court supported on one side by his son Jawan Bakht and on the other by a servant. The question whether he pleaded guilty or not guilty had to be explained to him with some difficulty because he did not seem to understand it. He then declared himself ignorant of the nature of the charges against him, though a translated copy of them had been furnished and read to him in the presence of witnesses some 20 days previously. During the day's proceedings, he appeared to be dozing or looking at his son. Neither one nor the other appeared to be much affected by their position.[30]

On the second day the trial had to be adjourned before 2 P.M. because the king began to groan and complain of feeling unwell. On the third day he was carried into court on a palanquin:[31]

> During the trial the king displayed a singular line of conduct, not at all in keeping with the serious position he occupied. Occasionally, while the evidence was progressing, he would coil himself up in his shawls, and, reclining upon the cushions placed for his convenience, would appear perfectly indifferent to the proceedings around him; at other time he would suddenly rouse up, as if from a dream, and loudly deny some statement of a witness under examination; then against relapsing into a state of real or assumed insensibility, he would carelessly ask a question, or laughingly offer an explanation of some phrase used in evidence. Upon one occasion, he affected such utter ignorance of a question before the court, in reference to his alleged intrigues with Persia, as to inquire, "Whether the Persians and the Russians were the same people!" He several times declared himself perfectly innocent of everything he was charged with, and varied the wearisomeness of his constrained

attendance, by amusing himself with a scarf, which he would twist and untwist round his head like a playful child.[32]

On the seventh day when Jat Mall was describing the relations between the priest Hasan Askari and the king, the latter 'as though affected by some galvanic agency, suddenly started up, and declared that he firmly believed in all that had been stated respecting the wonderful powers of Hasan Askari'.[33] However, on the tenth day when Hasan Askari denied that he had ever claimed possession of supernatural powers, the king 'denied all knowledge of him (Hasan Askari) and his powers'.[34]

On the fifteenth day, when Mukund Lal deposed that Basant Ali Khan had announced that the king had given his consent for the slaughter of the Europeans, the defendant 'looked up at the court and putting his forefinger into the mouth made an Asiatic sign'. This was intended to indicate that he would pluck his tongue out if he ever gave any such consent.[35]

No defence evidence was produced other than a written statement in Hindustani handed over by Bahadur Shah on the twentieth day of the trial. On 9 March which was the last day of the hearing an English translation of the defence statement was read out. It was followed by the final address of the Judge Advocate-General. The court found the defendant guilty of all the charges preferred against him and sentenced him to be transported for the remainder of his days, either to one of the Andaman Islands, or to such other place as might be selected by the Governor-General in Council.[36]

In his written statement Bahadur Shah pleaded:

I had no intelligence on the subject previously to the day of the outbreak. About 8 O'clock A.M., the mutinous troopers suddenly arrived and set up a

noisy clamour under the palace windows, saying they had come from Meerat after killing all the English there; and stating, as their reason for having done so, that they had been required to bite with their teeth, cartridges greased with the fat of oxen and swine, in open violation of the caste of both Hindus and Mussulmans. When I heard this, I immediately had the gates under the palace windows closed, and sent intelligence to the Commandant of the Palace Guards...Near evening, these traitors brought as prisoners some European men and women whom they had found in the Magazine, and resolved on killing them. I had recourse to persuasion, and succeeded in getting their lives spared for the time. The mutinous soldiers, however, kept them prisoners in their own custody. Subsequently, on two occasions, they again determined on killing these Europeans, when I again restrained them from their purpose by entreaty and persuasion, and saved the lives of the prisoners. However, on this last occasion, though I again did all in my power to reason with the rebellious soldiery they would not heed me, and carried out their purpose of slaying these poor people. I gave no orders for their slaughter. Mirza Moghal, Mirza Khizr Sultan, Mirza Abulbakr, and Basant, one of my known personal attendants, who had leagued with the soldiery, may have made use of my name; but I have no knowledge that they did; nor do I know that my own armed retainers, acting independently of my orders, joined in the slaughter...As regards the orders under my seal, and under my signatures, the real state of the case is, that from the day the soldiery came and killed European Officers, and made me a prisoner, I remained in their power as such. All papers they thought fit, they caused to be prepared, and, bringing them to me, compelled me to affix my seal...It was just the same case as regards the petitions bearing orders in my own writing.

Whenever the soldiers of Mirza Moghal, or Mirza Khizr Sultan, or Abulbakr, brought a petition, they invariably came accompanied by the officers of the army, and brought the order they desired, written on a separate piece of paper, and compelled me to transcribe it with my own hand on the petition. Matters went on so far in this way that they used to say, so that I might hear them, that those who would not attend to their wishes would be made to repent their conduct and for fear of them I could say nothing. Moreover, they used to accused my servants of sending letters to and of keeping in league with the English, more particularly the physician Ahsan Ullah Khan, Mahbub Ali Khan, and the Queen Zinat Mahal, whom they said they would kill for doing so. Thus one day, they did actually plunder the physician's house, and made him a prisoner, intending to kill him; but refrained from their purpose only after much entreaty and supplication, keeping him a prisoners; however still. After this, they placed others of my servants in rest, for instance Shamshir-ud-dowlat, the father of the queen Zinat Mahal. They even declared they would depose me, and make Mirza Moghal King. It is a matter for patient and just consideration then, what power in any way did I possess, or what reason had I to be satisfied with them? The officers of the army went even so far as to require that I should make over the queen Zinat Mahal to them that they might keep her a prisoner, saying she maintained friendly relations with the English. Now, if I was in the full exercise of power and authority, should I have permitted the physician Ahsan Ullah Khan's and Mahbub Ali Khan's imprisonment...I found myself in such a predicement that I was weary of my life, while my officials had no hopes of their being spared. In this state of things, I resolved to accept poverty, and adopted the garb, colored with red earth, of a

religious mendicant, intending to go first to the shrine of the Qutb Sahib, thence to Ajmir, and from Ajmir eventually to Mecca; but the army would not allow me...What confidence could I place in troops who had murdered their own masters? In the same way that they murdered them, they made me a prisoner, and tyrannized over me, keeping me on in order to make use of my name as a sanction for their acts. Seeing that these troops killed their own officers, men of high authority and power, how was I without an army, without treasure, without stores of ammunition, without artillery, to have resisted them, or make arrangements against them? But I never gave them aid in any shape. When the mutinous troopers first arrived, the gateway under the palace windows being in my power, I had it closed. I sent for the Commandant of the Palace Guards, and acquainted him with what had happened, and prevented his going amongst the mutineers. I also immediately sent two palanquins for ladies, and two guns for the protection of the palace gate, on the several requisitions of the Commandant of the Palace Guards and the Agent of the Lieutenant-Governor. Moreover, I dispatched a letter the same night by camel express to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor of Agra, acquainting him with the calamitous occurrences which had happened here. So long I had power, I did all that I was able...When these troops prepared to abscond, finding an opportunity, I got away secretly under the palace windows, and went and stayed in Humayun's Mausoleum. From this place I was summoned with a guarantee that my life should be spared, and I at once placed myself under the protection of the Government. The mutinous troops wished to take me with them, but I would not go.[37]

Bahadur Shah's statement rings true and the verdict of the court was manifestly wrong. It is amply clear from what we have stated in the previous pages that he was a weak old man incapable of independent decision and action. Lieutenant Ommaney, who was the incharge of the king in 1857 and ultimately escorted him to the place of his exile at Rangoon, confirms that 'he was too old to have initiated or taken any active part in the horror of those days, and was the tool of the bolder and more truculent spirits, male and female, about him'.[38] As the *Cambridge History of India* has pointed out. 'If this shadow-king had influence enough to make the Company's sepoy forces munity, he would have used it many years before.[39]

'The mutineers', explained Ahsanullah at the trial, 'had several inducements for throwing themselves into the city of Delhi:-

First. -- Delhi was close to Meerut, where the mutiny commenced, and the Meerut troops were of one mind with those of Delhi;

Secondly. -- There was considerable treasure and abundance of magazine stores at Delhi;

Thirdly. -- There was a wall rounded Delhi, and the city could be well-defended;

Fourthly. -- The King of Delhi had no army, and was defenceless; and

Fifthly. -- The king was a personage to wait upon whom all Chiefs' Hindu or Mahommendan, would have considered an honour to themselves.

The troops did not inform the king previously of their intention to go over to him, nor had the King any knowledge of the Volunteer Regiment having made common cause with the Meerut troops.[40]

'It should be remembered,' observes Spear,' that Bahadur Shah was eighty-two years of age when the Mutiny broke out. Four years travellers had been writing of his senility and feebleness. Mutinous sepoys seized the palace and treated him so disrespectfully that he threatened to retire to the shrine of Qutb Sahib as a *pir* or religious devotee, and those same critics denounced him as an arch intriguer and conspirator, as one of the chief villains of the whole tragedy... To satisfy these critics, Bahadur Shah should either have resisted the sepoys or fled from them. But no one has ever suggested how he could have done either. His own guard and some of his family had joined the mutineers. Was this octogenarian expected to rush out upon them, berserk, and to die resisting the restoration of the very authority he had always claimed for himself? Alternatively, where was he to fly to? How was this young gallant to reach a non-existent British army in the height of the hot season? Perhaps he was to ride alone in disguise like Theophilus Metcalfe, to rest by day in caves and guide himself by the stars at night, until he reached a friendly British camp. And how friendly would it have proved?'[41]

At the trial Bahadur Shah was described at one and the same time 'ex-King of Delhi' and 'a subject of the British Government in India'. His actual status, as we have already explained at length in these pages, was that of an independent monarch though physically his sovereignty was limited to the palace-fortress of Delhi and its precincts. It would have been more politic quietly to have deposed him by right of conquest. The staging of a trial only excited greater sympathy for the hapless old man.

The Sack of Delhi

Between the mutineers and the people of Delhi there was no basic conflict. Such privations as the

population suffered during the siege were due to war conditions, lack of discipline among the sepoys, and the suspicion that many of the inhabitants were sympathizers of the British. The British forces, on the other hand, took Delhi as conquerors after a bitter struggle and as avengers of the slaughter of British men, women and children.

That British women and children were mercilessly killed is undeniable but the stories that the honour of British women was outraged were unfounded. W. Muir head of the Intelligence Department wrote on 30 December 1857:

> My connection with the Intelligence Department, at the Headquarters of the Government of Agra, has brought me during the past six months into contact with messengers and spies from all parts of the country. I gladly add my testimony, that nothing has come to my knowledge, which would in the smallest degree support any of tales of dishonour current in our public prints. Direct evidence, wherever procurable, has been steadily and consistently against them.
>
> The people, - those who must have known, had there been any case of outraged honour, and would have told us, uniformly deny that any such things were ever perpetrated or thought of. The understanding of the people on this point, if, as I believe, we have correctly apprehended it, cannot be wrong.
>
> Judging from the great accumulation of negative evidence, support as it is on many important points by direct and positive proofs, it may be safely asserted that there are fair grounds for believing that violation before murder was never committed.[42]

The passion for bitter revenge not only among the British forces but among the British people generally was simply consuming. General Nicholson, much admired for his qualities of leadership and valour, wrote to a friend, 'Let us propose a Bill for flaying alive, impalement or burning of the murderers of the women and children at Delhi. The idea of simply hanging the perpetrators of such atrocities is maddening. I wish I were in that part of the world, that if necessary, I might take the law into my own hands'.[43]

A gentleman whose letters were first published in the *Bombay Telegraph* and afterwards 'went the round of the Indian and English papers' remarked that General Wilson's 'hookum' that women and children must be spared 'was a mistake' as they were 'not human beings but fiends, or, at best, wild beasts deserving only the death of dogs'. And he described the state of affairs in Delhi on 21 September as follows: 'The city is completely deserted by all the mutineers; and, in fact, there are few natives of any sort to be found, excepting those of our army. All the city people found within the walls when our troops entered were bayoneted on the spot; and the number was considerable, as you may suppose, when I tell you that in some houses forty and fifty persons were hiding. These were not mutineers, but residents of the city, who trusted to our well-known mild rule for pardon. I am glad to say they were disappointed'.[44]

'That the European soldiers, maddened as they were with the thirst for vengeance, and utterly insubordinate through drunkenness, really refrained from molesting the women, is what many may hope; but few who have had any experience of military life, in the barrack or in the camp, will credit...But...is it conceivable that the Sikhs, Goorkas, and Afghans concurred in exhibiting equal self-control in the this single respect'.[54] An item in the *Times* of 19 November

1857 ran: 'I have given up walking about the back streets of Delhi, as yesterday an officer and myself had taken a party of twenty men out patrolling, and we found fourteen women with their throats cut from ear to ear by their own husbands, and laid out in their shawls. We caught a man there who said he saw them killed, for fear they should fall into our hands; and showed us their husbands, who had done the best thing they could afterwards, and killed themselves'.[46]

A lady was shocked to find that Delhi had not been utterly destroyed, 'I could not but think that it was a disgrace to England that this city, instead of being razed to the ground, should be allowed to stand... Delhi ought to be razed to the ground, and on its ruins a church or monument should be erected, inscribed with a list of all the victims of the mutinies...'.[47] An 'order went forth that every house within the area between the Delhi Fort and the Great Mosque was to be raised to the ground, as an act of punishment, and also for military reasons. No compensation at all was to be given. Innocent and guilty were to suffer, both alike.

'The old house and property of the family of Zaka Ullah, as we have seen, came within this area. Therefore, along with many hundreds of other innocent people, his aged father and mother and the whole family were ruthlessly driven out. They found themselves, homeless and outcast, starving and destitute, at a time when multitudes of others were in the same condition. There was no place, within the city itself, to for refuge':[48]

Some correspondents to Anglo-Indian newspapers considered that Delhi ought to be raised to the ground (which would have been by far the most laborious work the English had as yet executed in India); that the plough-share should be passed over the site of the Juma-e-Masjid, and a cross erected

upon the spot; that no Mahomedan should be employed by our Government, though some of our bravest regiments were nearly made up of them; that Islam ought to be confined and exasperated by insulting enactments, and Hinduism alarmed by interference with the system of caste and by chronic affronts, as if the prejudices and customs of a nation can be destroyed by law. An immense number of natives, they thought, ought to be killed. Some of them held the country ought to be christianized, and the inhabitants taught English en masse. Some could not perceive why Hindostan could not be colonized as well as New Zealand. Others would send a large European population to cultivate the peaks of the Himalayas.[49]

For several days after the assault' wrote Mrs. Saunders (wife of the Commissioner of Delhi), 'every native that could be found was killed by the soldiers, women and children were spared'.[50] 'The troops', noted Saunders himself, 'were completely disorganized and demoralized by an immense amount of plunder which fell into their hands and the quantity of liquor which they managed to discover in the shops of the European merchants of Delhi'.[51]

It was not till the end of November that the Hindu residents of Delhi were permitted to return. No Muslims could enter the gates without a special order and a mark was put upon their houses and they had to prove their loyalty.[52] 'Offenders who were seized were handed over to a military commission to be tried. The work went on with celerity. Death was almost the only punishment, and condemnation almost the only issue of a trial. The gentlemen who had to judge offenders were in no mood for leniency. The murder of their relatives in the mutinies, the death of their friends and comrades in battle, the sight of the ruins of the European bungalows,

and the recollections called forth by the very stones of Delhi, were enough to embitter the heart of any one'.[53]

A report of the Government Intelligence Department read:

....General Wilson ordered that no protection tickets should be half to be valid unless countersigned by him, and the consequence was that but few obtained anything like protection for their property - no guards could be furnished, and before 2 or 3 days had elapsed there was not a house which had not been ransacked and plundered of its contents, friends and foes of the Govt. suffering to an equal extent. The chief wealth of the citizens, however, had been carefully buried or secreted in closets which had been ingeniously bricked up and plastered over. The Sheikhs and others with the force very soon learnt the artifice, and a very considerable amount of plunder has been carried off, which will not enrich the Prize Fund.[54]

Lord Elphinstone reported to Dir John Lawrence, 'After the siege was over, the outrages committed by our army are simply heartrending. Wholesale vengeance is being taken without distinction of friend of foe. As regards looting, we have surpassed Nadir Shah'.[55]

'Day after day, week after week, month after month, the hanging went on; and the two large gallows in the middle of the Chandni Chowk (the Regent-street, or rather Boulevards of Delhi), with their ghastly burdens, contrasted strangely with the life and gaiety around them; with the English soldiers in their scarlet uniform or *khakee* undress; the Sheikh and Afghan irregular cavalry, on their prancing, well-groomed, gaily-saddled horses - the riders wearing small red turbans spangled with gold, their dark-blue tunics turned up with red; red cummerbunds, light-yellow trousers, large top-boots, and arms sharp for use, bright for ornament; Goorkas "dressed up to the ugliness of

demons", in black worsted head-gear (described as a frightful compromise between a Glengarry cap and a turban) and woollen coats; English ladies and children on elephants, and Englishmen on camels, horses, and ponies. A visitor - one of the many who poured into Delhi after the capture - notices as a characteristic feature of the scene, a prize agent in a very pretty carriage, with servants in handsome livery, and his children after them, mounted on an elephant. The same witness adds - "I saw Sir Theophilus Metcalfe the other day; he is held in great dread here by the natives, and is every day trying and hanging all he can catch".[56]

Two Indians have also left behind a record of what happened in Delhi, 'In the city no one's life was safe. All able-bodied men who were seen were taken for rebels and shot':[57]

> The (Christians) killed, shooting and hanging, everybody whom they found from his (King's) people as they did (shoot or hang) many of the other inhabitants besides these. No one was saved from these feeble persons expect those who took to flight secretly, leaving in concealment during the night or those who escaped with promptitude, stealthily marching in the day time. But the number of these was small.

Then the Christians killed the great officials and not ables living in the vicinity and the suburbs of the city; (they) usurped their lands and property, houses and mansions, chattels and wealth and their arms and goods, horses and elephants and their he-camels and she-camels; (they) annihilated them with all their families and children although they had become their subjects and had submitted to them because of fear and expectations. Then they stationed their forces on every route so that they might seize those who were trying to escape and torture them. They captured

many of these fugitives and none could escape but a few. They looted first whatever from gold and silver was found with the captives, and also plundered their covering sheets, clothes, *tahbands* and trousers. Then they sent them to their officers who sentenced them to death by hanging or beheading. None escape these killings, neither the young nor the invalids, nor the nobles, nor the lowborn. Thus the number of those who were beheaded or hanged reached upto thousands. Most of persons who suffered these tyrannies of the tyrant were the believers in Islam.[58]

Even the splendid palace-fortress was not spared. In his *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* (Vol. II, p. 312)[59] James Fergusson writes: 'The whole of the area between the central range of buildings to the south, and eastward from the bazar, measuring about 1000 ft. each way, was occupied by the haram and private apartments of the palace, covering, consequently, more than twice the area of the Escurial, or, in fact, of any palace in Europe. According to the native plan I possess, which see no reason for distrusting, it contained three garden courts, and some thirteen or fourteen other courts, arranged some for state, some for convenience; but what they were like we have no means of knowing. Not one vestige of them now remains...The whole of the haram courts of the palace were swept off the face of the earth to make way for a hideous British barrack, without those who carried out this fearful piece of Vandalism, thinking it even worth while to make a plan of what they were destroying or preserving any record of the most splendid palace in the world'.

The same author tells us that, 'when we took possession of the palace, everyone seems to have looted after the most independent fashion. Among others, a Captain (afterwards Sir) John Jones tore up a great part of platforms, but had the happy idea to get his loot set in marble as table tops. Two of these he brought home and

sold to Government for £ 500, and were placed in the India Museum'.[60]

Muslims were not permitted to use the Grand Mosque of Shah Jahan for five years; some parts of the Fatehpuri Masjid, second largest in Delhi, continued in non-Muslim hands till 1875; and the beautiful Zinat ul Masjid, built by Aurangzeb's daughter, was handed back to the Muslims by Lord Curzon only in the beginning of the twentieth century.[61]

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3. This narrative so far has been taken mainly from G. B. Malleson, *History of the Indian Mutiny*. London 1879, Vol. II, pp. 71-75.
4. Hodson, *Twelve Years of a Soldier's Life in India*. p. 305
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6. Hodson, *Twelve Years of a Soldier's Life in India*. p.324.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 308.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 324
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 362-63.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 300.
11. This narrative has been taken from Hodson, *Twelve Years of a Soldiers' Life in India*, pp. 300-02, 308-14. It is based on the

accounts of Hodson and MacDowell both of whom were personally involved in the occurrence.

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14. *Ibid.*, p. 327.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 308,329.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 322.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 322.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 316. Most British writers later condemned Hodson. For instance Malleson in his *History of the Indian Mutiny* wrote 'A more brutal or a more unnecessary outrage [than the murder of the princes] was never committed' (Vol. II, p. 80).
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Deportation and Death

The Journey

For some months the question of Bhadur Shah's place of exile remained undecided. The military commission which tried him had indicated the Andaman Islands as the destination but that proposal was dropped, presumably because those islands were normally used for the detention of violent criminals from India. A more distant location was considered more suitable.

A letter from the Governor-General in Council dated 27 October 1857 to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors had stated that it was intended by the Government of India to deport the former emperor to British Kaffraria. It was requested that the British Government should take necessary action to obtain the consent of the Cape authorities for the detention of Bahadur Shah as a state prisoner in some suitable part of the colony.

On 10 March 1858, Sir George Grey the Governor of the Cape and its dependencies stated in the local parliament: 'A correspondence will be laid before you, detailing the reasons for which it is intended to detain the King of Delhi in confinement in British Kaffraria. you will find from those papers, that this is an isolated

case, and that no intention exists of transporting prisoners from India to her Majesty's South African possession's.

Further consideration, however, led the Governor-General to change his mind. This was not only because legal objections might be raised to the proposal to send the ex-king to Kaffraria but 'also because the advanced age of Mahomed Bahadur Shah and the physical infirmities attendant thereupon made it doubtful whether he would be able to bear the discomforts and inconveniences of a long sea voyage during which heavy weather might have to be encountered'.

While the final destination of Bahadur Shah was still under consideration, it was decided to remove him from Delhi to Calcutta and on 7 October 1858 the king and his family commenced the journey without knowing where it would finally end.

Meanwhile, the Governor-General decided to investigate whether there was any medical objection to the removal of the ex-King by sea to Rangoon[1] and his detention there or at any other place in the Province of Pegu. The party reached Allahabad on 13 October and there the royal prisoner was examined by a medical committee of three doctors. The committee reported on 13 November 1858 that 'allowing for the natural functional decay attending his advanced age...his general physical condition is good beyond what they anticipated to find, that he is hale and vigorous for his age and free from organic diseases...the committee can see no objection on professional grounds to his removal by sea to Rangoon or to his future residence there or other place in the Province of Pegu...on the contrary as compared with the climate of the upper Provinces that of Pegu is mild and soft and equable throughout the year and not liable to the considerable vicissitudes of temperature experienced in the North-Western

Provinces of India and on this account possessing conditions generally considered favourable to the prolongation of life in its advanced stages'.[2] The committee recommended also that a doctor be detailed to accompany the ex-king.

The Governor-General resolved that Bahadur Shah be detained at Rangoon with the probability that he would eventually be sent to Tonghoo, 300 miles from Rangoon in the vicinity of the Karen territory because 'it is isolated and so far removed from the usual line of travellers and traffic that no stranger, least of all a native of Hindoostan, can enter it without attracting the attention of the local authorities. The persons could there be allowed a relaxation of the restraint which it will be necessary to impose upon them in the populated and frequented city of Rangoon. Tonghoo is further recommended by the salubrity of its climate and by the fact that English troops are usually cantoned there. But there is at present no suitable accommodation at that station and the removal of the prisoners will not take place until measures shall have been taken to secure them against any inconvenience from this cause'.[3] In the end, however, Bahadur Shah was detained at Rangoon till the end of his days.

The manner of his departure from Delhi was reported in the *Delhi Gazette* of 13 October in these terms, The ex-King, his family, and attendants, were brought from their place of confinement at an early hour on Thursday; and, after being placed in their several conveyances, were drawn up in line on the piece of road leading from the Lahore Gate of the palace to the Grand Trunk Road, where the former guard, of the 2nd Bengal fusiliers, made them over to a troop of H.M's 9th lancers, told-off for the duty. This was done in the presence of Mr. C.B.Saunders, Commissioner of Delhi, Lieutenant Ommaney, officer incharge of state prisoners, and some other officers who were present. A

squadron or two of the lancers then trotted off as an advance guard, and the *cortege* commenced moving. The first palanquin carriage contained the deposed monarch and his two sons, Jewan Bakht and Shah Abbas (the latter a youth, the son of a concubine), the carriage being surrounded by lancers on all sides. Next followed a close carriage, containing the Begum Zinat Mahal, with whom were Jewan Bakht's wife, her mother and sister, and an infant. The mother and sister of Jewan Bakht's wife were allowed their choice of other going or remaining at Delhi. They preferred the former. The third carriage contained the Taj Mahal Begum, another of the ex-King's wedded wives, and her female attendants. Next followed five magazine store carts, with tilted tops, drawn by bullocks. These contained the male and female attendants, four in each cart, a party of lancers accompanying each. In this order the cavalcade progressed very well, until more than half the distance across the bridge of boats had been accomplished; when, all of a sudden, one of the bullocks in a magazine cart, probably discovering the nature of the load he was assisting across the Jumna, and finding it *'infra dig'* to do so, displayed his sagacity by a violent attempt to deposit his worthless burden in the river. As the companion bullock's understanding was not of the same calibre, he pulled in the opposite direction, and one wheel of the cart, along with the refractory bullock, descended into the boat, a lamp-post luckily placed preventing a complete capsize. This little event delayed the line some twenty minutes or half-an-hour; when, the cart bullock having been replaced, the cavalcade recommenced its move onwards, and reached the encamping-ground at Ghazee-oo-deen-nuggur, without further accident or delay of any kind. The band of the 2nd fusiliers played the lancers out of Delhi, and by half-past 3 A.M. they were clear of the city. In camp, the principal prisoner and his two sons occupy a hill tent. A soldier's tent, with *kunnant* enclosure, is provided for

the ladies of the *zenana*, and two others for the servants; the whole surrounded by a high *kunnant* enclosure. The prisoners are securely guarded by dismounted lancers, armed with swords and pistols, both inside and outside the enclosure; while pickets form the police battalion are thrown out beyond. The horses of the lancers - a whole troop, actually on duty over the state prisoners - are kept ready saddled; and the enclosed camp is very judiciously pitched between the lancers and Kaye's troop of horse artillery. Lieutenant Ommaney's tent is pitched just outside the enclosure. By all accounts the prisoners are cheerful; and the females may be heard talking and laughing behind their screens, as if they did not much regret their departure from Delhi'.

All concerned were instructed to keep the ex-King departure from the capital city as secret as possible: 'Thoroughly guarded as the prisoners will be...it is not very probable that any attempt at a rescue will be made or if made it is still less likely that it would prove successful but it nevertheless behoves the local authorities to take every precaution to prevent undue publicity, in the present unsettled state of the country in Oudh and elsewhere, being given to them measure prior to the departure of the ex-King from Delhi'.[4]

During the journey, Lieutenant Ommaney who had been the custodian of the king during his incarceration at Delhi, was to be 'in political charge' of the prisoners while the officer-in-command of the detachments was to be responisible for all military arrangements. No person what ever was to be permitted to visit or communicate with the ex-King or his companions except that a medical officer was to be allowed access to the prisoners in the event of sickness arising among them. At the same time the officers incharge of the royal party were told to show 'every consideration to the prisoners consistent with their absolute security'.

Including the four state prisoners - Bahadur Shah, Zinat Mahal, Jawan Bakht (Bahadur Shah's son by Zinat Mahal), Shah Abbas (Bahadur Shah's son by a concubine) - it was a party of twenty-nine persons who originally left Delhi for Allahabad. Fourteen persons decided to leave the ex-King at Allahabad. The eleven who accompanied the state prisoners to Rangoon were.[5]

1. Ahmed Beg (Ahmad Beg) - male attendant of Bahadur Shah.)
2. Sooltanee (Sultani) } Female attendant of Bahdur Shah.
3. Ishurut (Ishrat) }
4. Mubaruck Nissa (Mubarak al-Nisa) mother of Shah Abbas.
5. Nawab Shah Zamani Begum (Shah Zamani Begam) wife of Jawan Bakht.
6. Neazo (Niazo) female attendant of Shah Zamani Begam.
7. Hoormut Bhai (Hurmat Bai) } Female attendants of Shah Abbas.
8. Looftun (Latifan?) }
9. Abdool Ruhman (Abd al-Rahman) male attendant of Zinat Mahal.
10. Hoseinee (Husaini) } Female attendants of Zinat Mahal.
11. Sandul (Sandal) }

Bahadur Shah and his companions left Allahabad on 16 November and proceeded to Mirzapur. They reached Mirzapur two days later and left the same day having embarked on board the steamer *Thames* and the flat *Soorma*. Their downward voyage next took them to Mirzapur (19 November), Benares (20 November), Dinapur (23 November), Monghyr (25 November), and Rajmahal (27 November). At Rampore they had to leave the *Thames* because her machinery developed a defect and embarked on the steamer *Koyle*. The new steamer and the flat *Soorma* passed through Culna on 1

December and arrived at Diamond Harbour on 4 December. There the prisoners were transferred to M.M.S. *Magara* and sailed for Rangoon. A letter from Calcutta described the prisoners' final departure from their native land, 'On the 4th December, at ten in the morning, the ex-King of Delhi, conveyed in the *Soorma* flat, in tow of the *Koyle* steamer, was taken on board Her Majesty's good ship of war, the *Magara*, which, for a vessel of the royal navy, presented a curious spectacle at the time, crowded as her main deck was with household furniture, live and lifeless stock in the shape of cattle, goats, rabbits, poultry, rice, peas, chattus innumerable, &c., &c., brought by the royal prisoner and his attendants, for their consumption and comfort. The flat was lugged alongside the gangway of the ship, so that the Delhi gentleman could step on board, Lieutenant Ommaneys of the 59th, who has had charge of him ever since he was taken, conducted him to this probably the last, conveyance that will ever again serve him in his peregrinations. He had two wives with him, so impenetrably veiled that they were led below by guides. He looked utterly broke up, and in his dotage; but not a bad type of Eastern face and manner -- something king -- like about his deeply furrowed countenance, and lots of robes and Cashmeres. He was quite self-possessed, and was heard to ask some of the officers what their respective positions were on board, &c. A son and a grandson are with him: and their very first care on touching the deck with their feet, was to ask for cheroots - took things easily, in short. The ex-King, meanwhile, went below, and was said to have stretched himself forthwith upon a couch of pillows and cushions, which his folk had arranged for him in a twinkling. The whole operation of transferring him and his from the flat was quickly effected; and then the guard of the 84th regiment returned to Calcutta, while the *Magara* steamed away down the Hooghly for its destination'.[6]

The fallen Moghul emperor and his entourage landed at Rangoon on 10 December 1858. His arrival did not 'seem to have caused much excitement' among the local Indian community 'a considerable number' of whom were 'wealthy Moghul merchants'. Some little curiosity was doubtless manifested at first' but even that died away after a few months.[7]

Life in Rangoon -- There was no convenient residence available for the royal party and they were locate partly in tents and partly in a portion of main guard which was partitioned off'. On 16 April 1859, Major A. P. Phayre .Commissioner of the Province of Pegu reported to the Government of India that a residence for the them had been nearly completed and the prisoners would be moved there in a few days. It was built of teak and was raised off the ground with a 'substantial palisade'.[8]

Lieutenant Ommaney handed over charge of the prisoners to Captain H. N. Davis on 1 April 1859 and at the end of that month the party were moved to their new abode.

The house was situated within a few yards of the main guard and like other wooden houses in the country, was considerably raised off the ground. It was in an enclosure 100 feet square and was surrounded by palisading 10 feet high. It consisted of four rooms, each 16 feet square. One room was allotted to the ex-King, another to Jawan Bakht and his wife, the third was taken by Zinat Mahal and the fourth was occupied by Shah Abbas and him mother. To each of the three rooms first referred to, 'a bathing was attached'.

The attendants either lounged about the *verandahs* or put up underneath the house which was covered with pounded bricks to keep the place dry. A drain all round the house also helped toward the same.

end. There were two bathrooms and a double necessary for the use of the servants and also a place to cook in.

Bahadur Shah and his son generally sat in the *verandah* of the upper story which was screened by chicks. There they could enjoy the prevailing breeze and also enjoy a pleasant view. They could watch the passers by as well as the ship. This relieved the monotony of their prison life and helped 'in some measure' to get them reconciled to their quarters.

The 'establishment kept up for the prisoners...... [was] upon the lowest possible scale'. It consisted of one *chuprassie* whose business it was to procure the daily supplies and who was 'a sort of confidential agent' between the prisoners and Davis. He was a Burmese who could speak 'Hindustani'. He commanded a higher pay than an Indian but Davis thought it prudent to employ a man who belonged to a race different from that of the prisoners. The other servants were a bhactri, a *dhobi* and a sweeper, all necessarily Indians but attached to Davis' service and obliged to live in his compound which was next to the prisoners. Davis thus had them 'constantly at hand' and could also 'keep a close supervision over them'.

No intercourse was permitted between the prisoners and the public and the servant could only gain admission by a pass from Davis. Pen ink and paper were strictly prohibited.

The cost of feeding the prisoners exceeded what it would have been in India. It was about 11 rupees a day for the sixteen prisoners. An extra rupee was allowed every Sunday and two rupees per head on the first of each month to meet their toilet necessities. At first the prisoners supplied themselves with many 'little necessaries' from their own resources but after some months they represented that their funds had been expended.

In his report to the Government of India dated 3 August 1859, Davis reported that the health of the ex-King 'is now tolerably good'. Dr. Dickinson, the civil surgeon, who had medical charge of the prisoners had formed a decidedly unfavourable opinion of the ex-King's health shortly after his arrival in Rangoon but after his removal from his former confined living quarters his condition had 'considerably improved'. His memory was still good 'when time is allowed to him to fix his ideas, but his articulation is indistinct consequent on the loss of his teeth. He certainly does not now give the impression of being capable of any extended mental energy'. But on the whole he appeared to bear the weight of his years remarkably well. He passed his days 'in listless apathy manifesting considerable indifference to all external affairs'. This apparently had been his normal state for a long time past and 'may continue so for some time to come until all of a sudden his career may come to a close without taking anyone by surprise'.

Mrs. Davis who occasionally visited both Begums, described Queen Zinat Mahal as a middle-aged woman. She enjoyed very good health. Davis himself too had several conservations with her from behind the screen. She frequently enlarged on the steps she took in writing to the late Mr. Colvin, Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces, begging him to come to her assistance, implying thereby that at that time the royal family were at the mercy of the rebels. She constantly averted that they were thus helpless even to protect the unfortunate girl who sought her protection. She also frequently alluded to the loss of her private treasure and jewels and stated that Major Hodson pledged his word and gave her a written document as security for her personal property. After Hodson's death she was required to give up the document. She was then dispossessed by Saunders the Commissioner of Delhi, of

all her valuables to the extent of rupees 20 lakhs in value.

Davis explained to her that, her husband being convicted of rebellion, all the property of the family became escheated to Government and that her establishment being separate from the king's and her residing in a separate palace made no difference to the position. However, she thought that the sequestration of her private property was contrary to custom.

Zinat Mahal appeared to be 'a woman of a masculine turn of mind judging from her conversation and deportment and of the two most probably she had more to say to her intriguers of the rebels than her imbecile husband'.

She also believed that Hakim Ahsanullah Khan had a hand and she and all other prisoners were very bitter against him and asserted that he 'was the principal person through whose insidious counsel the destruction of the European prisoners was brought about'.

The younger Begum Zamani wife of Jiwan Bakht was a young and pretty woman probably not more than fifteen years old although she already had been the mother of two children. She seemed to feel the restraint of the prison more than the others due to the delicate state of her health 'consequent upon her accoutrement' which took place shortly after her arrival at Rangoon. The child was a male one and was still-born.

This young lady and the king both are 'particularly fond of soliciting the services of the doctor upon every trifling occasion and the young lady is very solicitous of being allowed to go out for an airing occasionally'.

The two sons of Bahadur Shah were both healthy and promising youths differing somewhat in bearing and

manners. Their elder, Jawan Bakht, exhibited 'an appearance and deportment of superiority'. This was 'induced probably more from the present recognized position in the family rather than any decided superiority in his character and attainment, he having been born a prince whereas his less fortunate half-brother, Shah Abbas, is but the son of a "hand maiden".

Both were 'extremely ignorant, the attainment of the older (Jawan Bakht) embracing merely a slight knowledge of reading and writing in the Persian character and when interrogated on the most ordinary topics their want of knowledge [was]...very apparent; even the boundaries of their native country are wholly unknown to them'.

They exhibited the 'very laudable desire to learn' and frequently 'expressed the very earnest wish to acquire acknowledge of the English language in particular' and seemed to be 'fully aware that by so doing they will have adopted the very best course for removing the misfortune, if not disgrace, attendant on their present state of ignorance' and they state that they had expressed a wish to the Commissioner of Delhi to be sent to England in preference to any other place.

The parents of the princes discussed the subject with Davis and appeared anxious that 'a commencement should be made'. Davis believed that the lads were possessed of sufficient intelligence to warrant a hope of speedy progress. They promised Davis that they would earnestly apply themselves if granted the opportunity by the British Government.[9]

In another version of Davis' report of 3 August 1859, we find the additional information that the attendants of the royal family were a low set...The only exception is perhaps Ahmed Beg. He seems a respectable old man and could have no motive for attending the ex-king than fidelity with the Begums. Attendant Abdool

Rahman is somewhat different. He is a low, cunning fellow and I am not quite satisfied as to what relationship he stands in towards the Queen [Zinat Mahal] whether attendant or something more.[10]

The wish of the two princes to be sent to England received enthusiastic support from Davis who spelled out his reasons in an 'unofficial' report.[11] He stated that the proposal had immense political as well as moral advantages.

Politically their removal to England would denationalize them and extinguish 'the latent but natural' hope of reviving the fortunes of their fallen dynasty.

For their normal ameliorastion 'the first and the most essential requisite' was to separate them from 'the baneful atmosphere of bigotry, superstition, ignorance and consequent degradation by which they are at present surrounded'. Their only companions were menials 'the very scum of a reduced Asiatic Haram' to whom 'the blessing of education and morality are alike unknown'.

The princes were of an impressionable age and participation in 'English fireside society' would give them a knowledge of the language of England and would also acquaint them with its laws, customs, and 'purer faith'. He cited the example of Maharaja Dalip Singh of the Punjab who had been brought to England with what the British Government considered good results.

Davis' recommendation to transfer the young men from Rangoon to England evidently was turned down by his superiors because we learn from a report he made on 1 July 1861 that the princes Jawan Bakht and Shah Abbas 'both attend at my house pretty regularly and study a little English with Mr. Finncane who was formerly Brigadier Segent Major here; they are making

remarkable progress and may require a superior teacher hereafter'.

In the same report Davis stated that the ex-Emperor was generally getting weaker and the civil surgeon was of the opinion that the 'tenure of his life' was 'very uncertain'. Zinat Mahal had enjoyed 'excellent health'. Mrs. Davis had occasionally taken Zamani out for a drive and both she and Zinat Mahal had been over to spend an hour or so at the Davis home from time to time.[12]

Bahadur Shah passed away on 7 November 1862. Davis' diary from 23 October to 10 November reads:

Rangoon, Thursday, 23rd October 1862 -- 'Visited the State Prisoners; found all correct. Aboo Zuffer is getting weaker.

Rangoon, Sunday, 26th October 1862. -- Visited the prisoners; found all correct. Ahmed Beg, male attendant of Aboo Zuffer, says his master feels weak, and feels it an exertion even to swallow his food. He asked for some assistance to be given, as Aboo Zuffer requires to be fed frequently with broth, &c; gave orders accordingly.

Rangoon, Monday, 27th October 1862. -- Visited to State Prisoners, Abu Zafar continues weak and appears breaking up.

Rangoon, Wednesday, 29th October 1862. -- Visited the State Prisoners. Aboo Zafer no better.

Rangoon Saturday, 1st November 1862. -- Visited the State Prisoners, Abu Zafar's state appears critical.

Rangoon, Monday, 3rd November 1862. -- Visited the State Prisoners. Abu *Zafar's* throat appears affected; it is very difficult to get broth down even in small quantities.

Rangoon, Wednesday, 5th November 1861. visited the State Prisoners. The Civil Surgeon does not think Abu Zafar can survive many days.

Rangoon, Thursday, 6th November 1862. -- Visited the State Prisoners. Abu Zafar is evidently sinking from pure decrepitude and apparently paralysis in the region of his throat; ordered bricks and lime to be collected near the spot appointed for his last resting place, and made other necessary arrangements.

Rangoon, Friday 7th November 1862. -- Abu Zafar, "Mahomed Bhadur Shah," expired this morning at about 5 O'clock. All things being in readiness, he was buried at 4 P.M. on the same day in the rear of the main guard in a brick grave, covered over with turf level with the ground. A bamboo fence surrounds the grave for some considerable distance, and by the time the fence is worn out the grass will have again covered the spot and no vesting will remain to distinguish where the last of the Great Moghuls rests.

[The object of rendering the spot where Bahadur Shah was buried traceless no doubt was to prevent it from becoming a place of pilgrimage].

A *Mullah* assisted at the funeral, and the body of the deceased was placed in a teakwood coffin, covered with red cotton velvet.

A crowd of Mahomedans from the bazar had assembled near the enclosure, but beyond a general rush to touch the coffin on its being brought out from the palisade round the prisoner's quarters, no inconvenience was experienced; they were all kept outside the enclosure, which had been erected by a few policemen on duty at the entrance; a few by-

standers were admitted inside the enclosure, in order that the interment might be sufficiently public.

The two sons of the deceased, Imam [Jawan] Bakht and Shah Abbas, and the male attendant, Ahmad Beg, accompanied the coffin; no females were allowed to be present, nor were any tithes allowed to be rehearsed.

Rangoon, Monday, 10th November 1862. -- Visited the State Prisoners; found all correct. None of the family appear to be much affected at the demise of the bedridden old man; indeed, they evidently view the event with satisfaction, and the eldest of the two sons probably feels his position rather raised by the event than otherwise. The death of the ex-King may be said to have had no effect on the Mahomedan part of the populace of Rangoon.[13]

The Times, London carried the following report in its columns on 16 January 1863, 'The telegraph must long ago have conveyed to you the news of the King of Delhi's death in his comfortable wooden house at Rangoon, just a month ago. His son Jumma Bakht, who is believed to have taken a personal share in the murder of 50 English women, children and men in the palace, has a large and increasing family, which may yet trouble us. They receive a subsistence allowance a pound sterling a month each and are allowed full liberty, within certain limits'.

'Jumma Bakht and his brother Shah Abbas are good English scholars. I know no event which forms so historic moralizing as the death in such circumstances, and after such a career of Mohammed Bahadur Shah, the last of the Moghuls, the descendant of Baber and Taimour, the representative of Changez Khan. He was close on 90 years of age, and had enjoyed the titular dignity and pension 27 years. Feroze Shah, the only dangerous member of his family, is, as I have side

plotting in Persia. Neither the ex-King's imprisonment, nor death has excited the slightest interest except, perhaps, among the fanatics who watch and pray for the final triumph of Islam'.

In time, grass covered the resting place of the last Mughal Emperor of India, as Davis had foreseen in the entry in his diary under the date 7 November 1862. When some persons from India travelled to Rangoon in 1903 to pay their respects at the grave, they could not find it. With the help of some local guides they 'fixed upon a space under a withered lotus tree as the site of the much sought-for grave'. An appeal was subsequently issued to raise a 'magnificent mausoleum' on the spot but the plan had to be dropped because the British Government disapproved of it. In 1934 a 'tomb was built on a humble and moderate scale'.[14]

Maulvi Mazhar al-Din Sherkoti published an account of his visit to Bahadur Shah's grave and last resting-place in *Akhbar-i-Kashmir* of 21 August 1925. This was reproduced by Bashir al-Din Ahmad in *Faramin-i-Salatin*.[15] He found the burial place in an enclosure within a courtyard measuring some 70 ft. x 50 ft. The courtyard was located beside a road and was covered with wild grass and bramble. The enclosure had a bamboo and wooden fence round it. In one corner there was a hut for the keeper of the tomb. It thatched roof had been blackened by the weather. Two or three small wooden platforms were lying about for offering prayers and reciting the holy *Qur'an*. Some tin sheets had been placed on four wooden posts below a tree. Under the tin sheets a ceiling had been improvised with a thick piece of coloured cloth. And it was their that the remains of both Bahadur Shah and Zinat Mahal were lying in a modest 1 ft. high grave.

On another day Sherkoti went to see the wooden house where Bahadur Shah had passed the last days of

his life. It was located behind the Central jail of Rangoon and was a rickety structure which had not been painted or repaired for some years and had decayed with age.

A seventy year old lady lived in it. Her name was Raunaq Begum. She was the daughter of Jawan Bakht and had remained unmarried in grief of her grandfather's dethronement. She recalled the happenings of the Great Rebellion with great pathos. She had a brother named Jamshed Bakht who had died on 21 June 1921 and was buried in the local Muslim cemetery. He had married thrice. One of his brides hailed from Lucknow and he had two daughters from that marriage. He had also married two Burmese wives and had a son from one of them. When the boy's mother died, her father took his grandson to India. The lad's whereabouts were not known. From the second Burmese marriage, Jamshed Bakht had a son named Sikandar Bakht.

At time time of Sherkoti's visit, Sikandar was 22 years of age. He had passed his matriculation examination and shared the wooden house with Raunaq Begam. He was leading a hard life because the British Government had not continued the stipend which his father had been receiving. Raunaq Begam had been granted an allowance of 150 rupees per month for her life-time but the residents of the old house were not entitled to sell it. The future of Bahadur Shah's surviving descendants looked bleak.

In 1957 the centenary of the Great Rebellion was celebrated both in Pakistan and India. A deputation of the citizens of Karachi[16] went on a pilgrimage to the last resting place of Bahadur Shah and a street in Karachi has been named after the last Mughal emperor. But a befitting mausoleum over his mortal remains has till to be raised. It seems only appropriate that the

Government of Pakistan should take the lead in the reviving this highly laudable but already far too delayed project and invite the Muslim countries, indeed all the Muslims everywhere in the world, to subscribe to it generously.

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16. Karachi at that them was the provisional capital of Pakistan.

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6

Bahadur Shah's Cultural Pursuits

Bahadur Shah was an old man[1] when the Great Rebellion broke out. Observers are agreed that at that time he was indecisive and infirm and very much under the influence of his ladies and favourite courtiers. His role in the rebellion was that of a hesitant figurehead. Since the rebellion was the most dramatic event of his life, the poor performance put up by him during that cataclysm is apt to dominate one's conception of his personality.

Of course, Bahadur Shah was not always old and ineffective. He had his youth and middle years. We have already pointed out that the British Government favoured his claim to the throne not only because he was the eldest son of Akbar Shah but also because he was the most promising among his sons. We have mentioned further that bishop Heber noted Bahadur Shah's predilection for literary pursuits in general and his of flair for writing poetry in particular.[2]

That Bahdur Shah was a cultured person and a patron and practitioner of the arts is not surprising. He had a rich heritage to inspire him. His ancestors had not only been warriors, administrators and builders, but they had been connoisseurs of the arts as well. Several

of them, including women, had written poetry, two of them wrote notable autobiographies,[3] and most of them adorned their courts with talented persons.

Since the time of Shah Alam, the Moghul kings had been mere pensioners of the British Government but in the popular mind their court was still the most prestigious stage in India for poets and artists to display their talent. Delhi was a thriving city and Hindus and Muslims lived there harmoniously.[4] Percival Spear describes the role of the Moghul court in the literary and cultural life of the metropolis during the last decade of the Moghul rule in the following word:

> The court was not merely a show, if only a tawdry one. Firstly, it exercised a positive influence in three directions. It was a school of manners and etiquette, Bahadur Shah himself being noted for his punctiliousness in this respect. The 'old world dignity and courtesy' often praised by travellers and visitors as one of India's virtues, stemmed from this centre and affected Muslims and Hindus alike. Long after Delhi had ceased to be the Paris of Power it continued as the Versailles of good manners. Secondly, it continued the royal tradition of patronizing the arts. Not much could be done for architecture from lack of money, though both Akbar and Bahadur Shah erected some modest buildings. Bahadur Shah was fond of gardens, the Roshanara and Qudsia in particular, and laid out one of his own at Shahdara.[5] But with fine arts the case was different. Calligraphy, that most distinctive of Islamic arts, flourished, and so did painting, whose patronage extended from royalty through the nobles to the British. Jiwan Ram was a leading painter (see W.H. Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official,* London, 1844, Chap.ii p.285), and the school has left a legacy of miniature portrait painting on paper and ivory, of court scenes and royal processions. It was a dying art

perhaps, but attractive in a subdued and rather plaintive way. The most favoured, however, was poetry. It was the major intellectual occupation of the Delhi classes, both in Persian and Urdu idioms. The poetical contests at the literary assemblies or *mushairas*, at which the emperor himself would sometimes preside, were major social events, and the spectators would experience something of the euphoria of a cup-tie. Literary controversies were a substitute for political ones and their factions for political parties.[6]

The same learned author tells us that Delhi was prosperous, being the distributing centre for the northern trade to the east and south. By 1852 it had about 160,000 inhabitants. Within it there lived the merchants, the financiers, the learned and the dependants of the court. Of the 2,104 *salatin* or descendants of the emperors listed in 1852, a considerable proportion lived outside the Fort walls. The neighbouring *nawabs* and *rajahs* had town houses for their occasional visits. Since political power was denied them the well-born turned their attention to where the last Moghul emperors held full sway within the Red Fort. Looked at with hindsight the premutiny pageantry has a dreamlike quality as though it never actually existed. It was the product of a group pretending that a dead past still existed because they had nothing to look forward to. And if the dream ended in a nightmare of violence, at least, while it lasted, it provided amusement, diversion and some mental refreshment to the people.[7]

Urdu had reached its prime. There its a galaxy of poets and of them the best known were Zauq and Ghalib. Of the latter it has been said: 'India possesses two inspired books the Vedas and the poems of Ghalib'.[8] They both preferred imperial Delhi to the regional princely seats of Lucknow, Hyderabad and Rampur. The

Nawab of Rampur was a great admirer of Ghalib and twice invited him to his court and rewarded him lavishly but Ghalib preferred the life at Delhi and returned to it. When a well-wisher suggested to Zauq that he would prosper much more if he went to Oudh, Zauq replied:

> *Kaunja'e Zauq par Dilli*
> *ki galyan chor kar*
>
> Oh! Zauq who would wish to forsake the alleyways of Delhi and go elsewhere.

Bahadur Shah was a middling poet and a skilled calligrapher. He wrote some prose and he was fond of gardens and painting. He was much respected for his gentle and courteous manner and sufic piety. He distributed a good part of the stipend he received from the British Government among his innumerable employees. The amounts were small but the recipients prized them because of their affection and veneration for the emperor. He never dismissed a person whom he had once engaged to serve him.[9]

He was a popular, not a classical, poet and had commenced composing verses from his youth. His *nom de plume* was Zafar. His collection of poems *(Diwan-i-Zafar)* is a voluminous book. Musicians and dancing girls all over India recited and sang his *ghazal*, *gits* and *thumriyan*. He took part in the poetic gatherings convened by his father, Akbar Shah, had there he met the poet Zauq whom Akbar Shah had nominated as poet laureate. Bahadur Shah took to Zauq and appointed him as his tutor.[10]

The suspicion, that many of the verses ascribed to Bahadur Shah in fact had been composed by Zauq, is not well-founded because Bahadur Shah had a style of his own. What must have happened was that Zauq made constructive suggestions to improve his royal pupil's production. Bahadur Shah's poetry was more musical

than Zauq's. It also had a distinctive idiom. Sayyid Zamir Hasan Dihlavi observes:

> It has to be admitted that Zafar has performed the very important task of maintaining the supremacy of the language of Delhi...As an expert linguist he first moulded and then brought into the fold of Urdu many words from other languages. We, therefore, find innumerable words from Hindi, Bhasha, Panjabi and Haryanvi languages which Zafar found nearer to Urdu and used them in his verses. Moreover, he used only those words in his poetry which were understood by ordinary people. It included simple and easy words and phrases from Hindi and Persian.[11]
>
> The contribution of Zafar in the development of Urdu language will always the appreciated. Every word used by him is considered as current in the dominion of literature. Non of his contemporaries can reach the salasatzaban and everyday idiom which is so typical of Zafar. Zafar's Urdu is the language of Qilla-i-Mulla and therefore the standard idiom.[12]

Here are some examples of Bahadur Shah's poems:

I

HUA ALLAHU AKBAR (HE THE GOD IS GREAT)

Jo dil men rakhe aur kare mun se bayan aur
Har bat par uske mujhe ho kiyon nah guman aur

When they have one thing in their heart and another on their lips.
I have no option but to doubt whatever they say

Din aur hai rat aur zamin aur zaman aur
rahte hain za khud raftah jahan se vuh jahan aur

They live in a different day, in a different night, and in a different period.

The world they live in is quite different from ours

Yakbar kie nazr dil o jan tere donon
ab kiya tujhe den hum kih nah dil aur nah jan aur

I have sacrificed for you both my heart and and my life
I have now nothing left to sacrifice for you, neither heart nor life.

De jam pih gar jam payape mujhe saqi
men bas nah kahon munh se, kahe jaon kah han aur

Even if you give me cup after cup of wine cupbearer.
I cold never refuse the offer of another cup but would ask for more and more.

Kiya hovega ek chak ko sinah ke sie se
dil men to hazaron hain abhi zakhm nihan aur

The stitching of one wound in my heart by you would make little difference because my heart is torn by thousands of such invisible wounds.

Yih shauq-i shadat ki hai tasir kih qatil
hoti hai mere khun se teri tegh ravan aur

It gives me such joy to sacrifice my life for you oh! slayer that my blood only makes your sword sharper.

Jaljae gi ae barq nahu dekh muqabil
hai sokhtah janun ka dam shulah fishan aur

Oh! lightning you will only burn yourself if you strike me; the breath of those consumed by love sets alight all other objects.

Kuchh chashm-i tar va soz-i jigar par nahin mauquf
afshar-i muhabbat ke bahut se hain nishan aur

My love is not reflected only by tears in my eyes and fire in my heart
There are many more marks of love for you.

Kis tarh gham-i yar ko men dil se nikalun
jae yih kahan, is ka thikana hai kahan aur

How can I eradicate my love for the beloved
Where can it go? its rightful place is in my heart.

Dun kil men jagah kiyonkar nah us pardah-nashin ko
us se nahin bihtar koi parde ka makan aur

Why should not I harbour my veiled beloved within my heart there is no better secret resting-place for her than my heart.

Mahfil se utha ghair ko aur us ke ivaz tu
rakhde meri chati pah koi sang-i giran our

Please expel my rival from your presence and in return I am prepared to bear any other heavy punishment.

Tu ghar sudhar apne khuda ki lie nasih
huta teri batun se mujhko khufkan aur

Oh! preacher for God's sake return to your own abode
As your patter renders me more sleepless.

Min khub barasta hai jo huti hai hava band
bahte hain Zafar askh dam-i zabt-i- fugfhan aur[13]

It rains harder when the wind becomes still
My tears flow more freely when I try to control my emotions.

II

Josh-i ab-i giryan se har moe misgan gal gaya
hai yih kiya sailab jis se sab nistan gal gaya

With the flood of my tears even my eye lashes melted
With this flood the whole garden has been inundated

Pahle askh-i shor punche to gali kuch astin
bah kih jab ae gale tak sab gariban jal gaya

When I wiped my acid tears with my sleeve, the sleeve melted
When my tears soaked my collar, it too melted.

Ablonse pae Majnun ke tapka ab-i garam

jal gaya koi, koi khar-i byaban gal gaya

The hot liquid which came out of the boils on Majnun's feet
Scorched everyone and everything in the wilderness.

Mujh se jab dast o gariban yar ke dar par hua
Ya ilahi kiyon nah us dam dast-i darban gal gaya

When my rival grappled with me at the door of my beloved
Why did not his arm melt?

Fasl-i garma men hua tu kis se itna ham baghal
pairahan tera pasine se meri jan gal gaya

Whom did you embrace so passionately in the hot weather
that your whole attire melted with your sweat

Dekhye kiya ho kih takhtah takhtah kashti ka mere
bahar-i be payan se hai ae shor-i tufan gal gaya

You will see when my boat breaks up into planks
In the limitless ocean even the storm will abate.

Ae Zafar afsus vahan har giz gali nah apni dal
Gosht sab shor-i ab-i hasrat se mera yahan gal gaya[14]

Oh! Zafar alas you did not succeed in your love
Though the acid of your desire had consumed all your flesh.

III
Qat'ah

Hansna aur bolna hai alam-i hasrat men kahan
khule kistarh dil-i ashiq-i dilgir ki bat

A spurned lover is unable to talk or laugh
how then could he explain the intricate affairs of his love.

Dekha hanste gul-i qalin ko nah ankhun se kabhi
aur kanun se suni bulbul-i tasvir ki bat

Has anyone ever seen a bud on a carpet bloom into a flower or heard by his ears the song of a painted nightingale.

Khalq dil men asar kiyon nah kare tera sukhan
sab hech kai vallah Zafar teri tasir ki bat

Why should not your words move the hearts of the masses

Oh! Zafar as there is nothing more effective than your verses.[15]

IV

Jab talak dunya ne ham se kuch burai ki nathi
hamko agahi burai aur bhulai ki nathi

Until the world had not harmed me, I was not aware of the difference between good and evil.

Yih tavvaqu hamko tum se be-vafai ki nathi
ash ani ki thi ham me kuch burai ki nathi

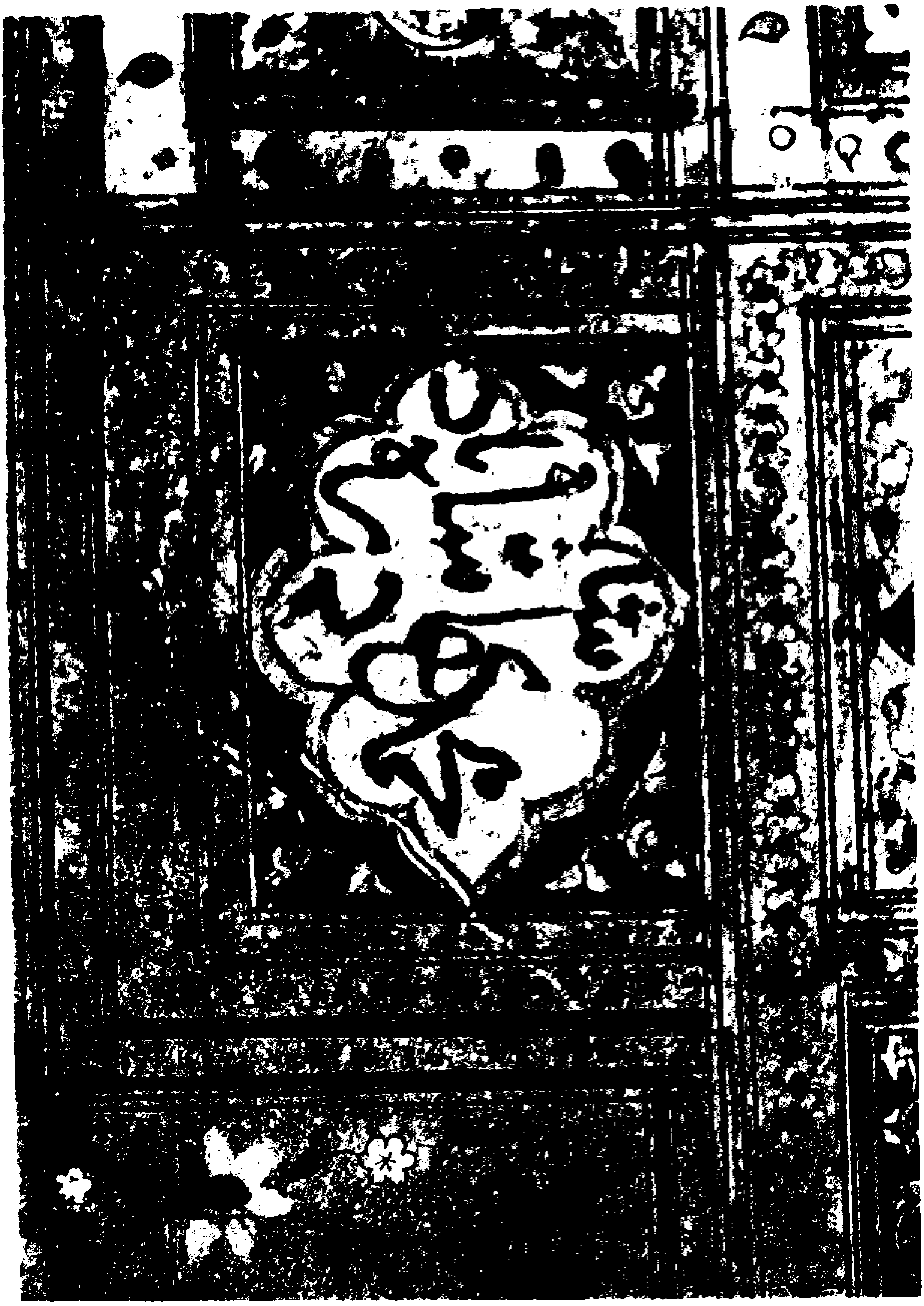
I did not expect that you to be unfaithful to me
I had not done any wrong in courting your friendship.

Thhe mukaddar tum hi varnah mere dil ka aainah
be kadurat thha ise hajat safai ki nathi

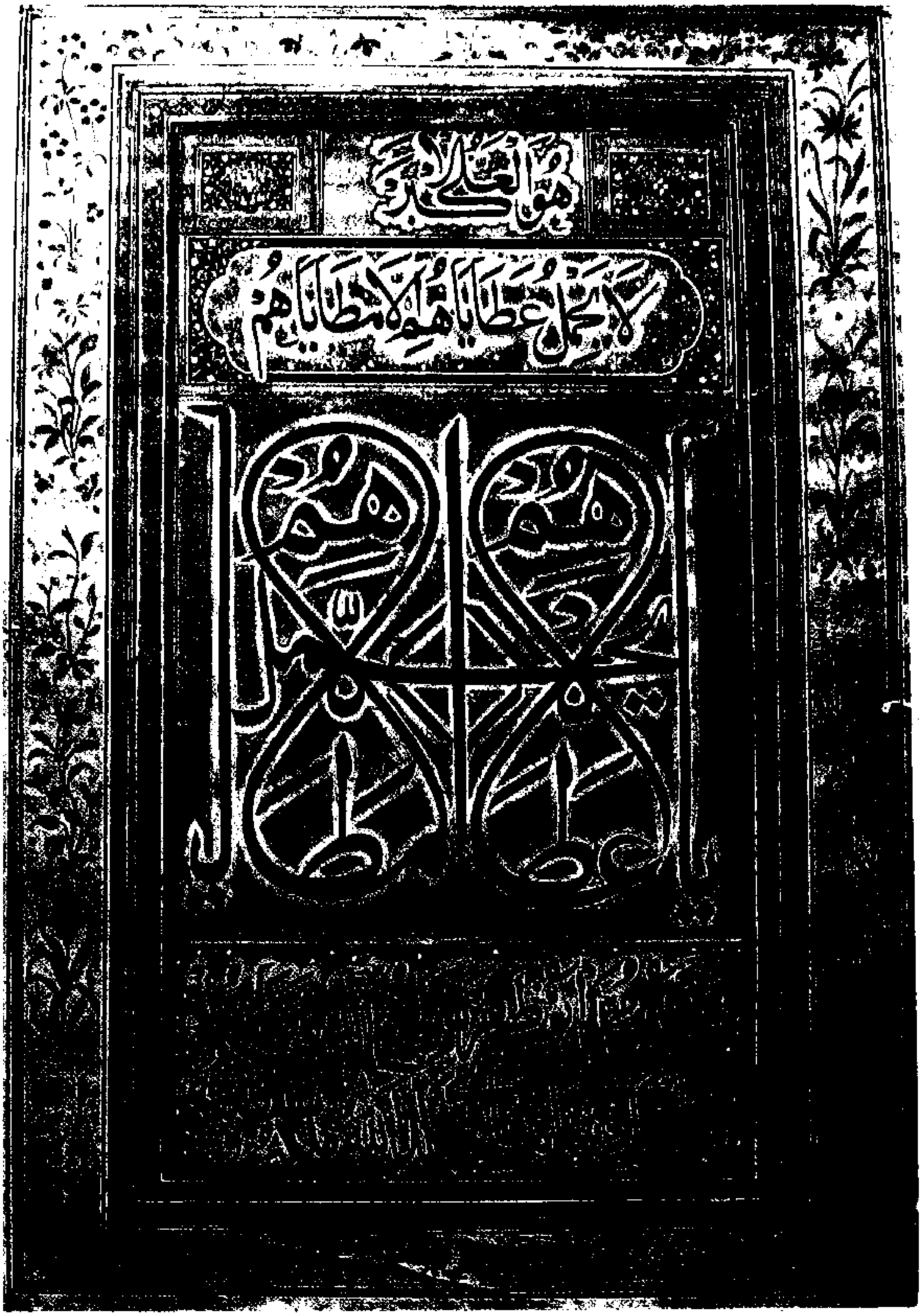
You doubted my sincerity otherwise the mirror of my heart
Was not impure and did not need to be cleansed

Tu ne kis ke didah-i pur-ab se ponchhe thhe askh
Aj vuh surkhi tere dast-i hinai ki nathi

Whose tears did you wipe with your hands last
Today the red colour of hina on your hands was not as bright as usual.



Autograph of Bahadur Shah



A Calligraphic Panel in Bahadur Shah's Handwriting

Mah tu nikla kiyon kashti lie masl-i gada
husn se tere tamanna gar gadai ki nathi

Oh! moon why did you appear with a beggar's bowl in your hands
I had not begged anything from my beloved.

Dil faribon men jo aus na-ashna ke agaya
Ausne kiya age kisi se ashnai ki nathi

My heart why did you fall in to the hands of that unkind alien
Knowing that she had many other lovers.

Zulf uski ham se bal karne lagi nahaqq Zafar
warnah koi vajah esi kaj adai ki nathi

Oh! Zafar the locks of her hair tied me up for no reason
In fact there was no cause for estrangement between us.[16]

Bahadur Shah wrote calligraphic panels in various scripts. Ziauddin Desai has indentified twelve buildings in Delhi which have commemorative and chronogramic verses in Arabic and Persian composed by Bahadur Shah engraved on their doors.[17]

We quote below two of his chronogramic verses written on the tablets of the graves of his father, Akbar Shah, and his tutor, the poet Zauq:

Shah Akbar firogh bakhsh-i jahan

Akbar Shah who illuminates the whole world

Munkhasif gasht az qaza chun badr

was displayed by fortune like a moon

Pe sal-i vafat guft Zafar

Zafar has told the date of his passing away

Arsh aramgah-i ali-qadr 1253/1837

the heaven is the resting place of the noble one 1837.

Tut-yi Hind Hazrat Ustad Zauq
Li gulshan-i jahan se jo bagh-i jinan ki rah

The song-bird of India, my master Zauq
When he took leave of theories garden of earth he took the road to the garden of heaven.

Sal-i vafat jo koi pochhe to ey Zafar
Kih Zauq janati az sar bakhshish Allah 1271

If someone enquires about the date of his death, Oh! Zafar
Say that Zauq went to heaven because of God's forgiveness 1271.

Bahadur Shah complied a three volume dictionary of prosody *Lughat-i Islah-i-sukhan* also known as *Talifat-i Abu Zafar.* This work is now extinct but Bahadur Shah has described it briefly in the preface of his *Sharh-i-Gulistan* which was published by the Royal Press in 1259 A.H. It is a commentary on Shaikh Saadi's *Gulistan* (Rose Garden). In it he has given various interpretations of the text of Saadi's book and has also included biographics of some *sufis* and saints.

Bahadur Shah also commissioned a great number of miniatures and large paintings.

His literary career ended with the Great Rebellion, not only because age had dimmed his faculties, but also because his British captors deprived him of pen and paper during his detention in Rangoon.[18]

'Taking him all in all', sums up Percival Spear, 'Bahadur Shah presents a pleasing if not a heroic figure. That be lacked the greater gifts of personality is obvious;

that he possessed real abilities and a certain charm is equally clear... Judged by the evidence available, by the standards of his time and in relation to the peculiar difficulties of his position, Bahadur Shah stands as a dignified, cultured, intellectual and not unsympathetic figure... The Moghul court, so long as it lasted, was the school of manners for Hindustan. From the time of Akbar it had much the same influence upon Indian manners as the Court of Versailles upon the Europeans. Sorely pressed as it was in the 18th century by the rough Afghans, the uncouth Mahrattas and the rustic Jats, its influence revived with the new tranquillity of the early 19th century. *Nawabi* Lucknow was a offshoot which maintained and spread its influence further down the country. Another was Hyderabad in the Deccan. From Bengal to the Punjab, and as for as Madura in the South, Mughal etiquette was accepted as the standard of conduct and Persian was the language of diplomats and the polite. Forms of address, the conventions of behaviour and to a large extent ceremonial dress, approximated to the standards of Delhi. Even the Mahrattas felt its subtle and all-pervading influence, and the Jats were proud to decorate a replica of a Mughal palace at Dig with the plunder they had carried from Delhi. At time when English cultural influence had hardly begun to spread beyond the Presidency towns, such an influence was an invaluable cement to society. The fall of the dynasty was a serious cultural loss, and inaugurated that period of piebald manners and mongrel conduct from which India suffers so acutely today'.

'The Court under Bahadur Shah was a cultural influence of great value. With the royal patronage it became the centre of the second Delhi period of Urdu literature, whose brightest star was the great Ghalib. By its patronage it kept alive the Delhi school of painting which produced at least two painters of merit in Raja Jiwan Ram and Husain Nazir. It was the natural centre

of all the arts and crafts. By its influence it encouraged all these tastes in the leisured classes. Art in India has always depended upon aristocratic patronage. The end of the Court involved a break in cultural as well as political tradition, and ushered in the garish period of utility into Indian life when education came to mean a lisping knowledge of English, and culture and Indian version of Dr. Smiles' self-help. The Court of Delhi, faded though it was, had more in it than the tinsel of *Khillats* or the honorifics of *shuqas*. It was the last refuge of a traditional culture whose tragedy it was largely to perish at the hand of political passion and misplaced alien benevolence.'[19]

References

1. He reached the age of 82 on 25 October 1857. See p. 37. f.n.2.
2. *See* p. 71
3. For example Babur, Humayun, Akbar, Daniyal (one of Akbar's sons), Gulbadan (Akbar's aunt), Salima Sultan (one of Akbar's wives), Dara Shukh, Zeb-un-Nissa (Aurangzeb's daughter) and Shah Alam wrote poetry; Babur and Jahangir wrote autobiographies.
4. *See* pp. 75-77.
5. Bahadur Shah also laid out a garden on the bank of the Jumna below the palace. T.G.P. [Percival] Spear, 'The Mughal Family and the Court in 19th Century Delhi, Journal of Indian History Vol. XX, 1941, p. 51.
6. Percival Spear, Ghalib: The Poet and His Age, edited by R. Russel, London 1972, pp. 49-50.
7. *Ibid.*, p.48.
8. T.G. Bailey, History of Urdu Literature, London, 1932, p. 71.
9. 'Bahadur Shah, Emperor of Delhi' *Salae Amm*, New Delhi, May 1928, P.25.
10. Ghalib was younger than Zauq and appeared on the poetic scene later. He alienated heir apparent Abu Zafar (later the Emperor Bahadur Shah) by writing a *qasida* in praise of

prince Mirza Salim, whom the emperor Akbar Shah at that time favoured as his successor. It was only after the death of Zauq that Bahadur Shah, now emperor, appointed him poet laureate.

11. Sayyid Zamir Hasan Dihlvi, '*Zafar ki shairi men qila-i-muall ki zaban*', *Ghalib Nama*, Vol. VII No.2, July 1986, p. 142. Translated from Urdu by the authors.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 145. Translated from Urdu by the authors.

13. *Kulliyyat-i Zafar*, Lucknow, 1870, Vol. 3, p. 44.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

17. In his article, '*Ghalib va Zafar ke manzum kathe*', *Ghalib Nama*, Vol. VII, No. 2, July 1986, p. 85. Translated from Urdu by the authors.

18. *See* p. 171

19. T.G.P. Spear, 'The Moghul Family and the Court in 19th Century Delhi', *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. XX, 1941, pp. 52-53, 59-60.

* * * * *

INDEX

A

B

G

H

I

J

K

L

M

T

U

V

W

Y

Z

- **Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah**
  Compiled by
  S. Quraishi
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